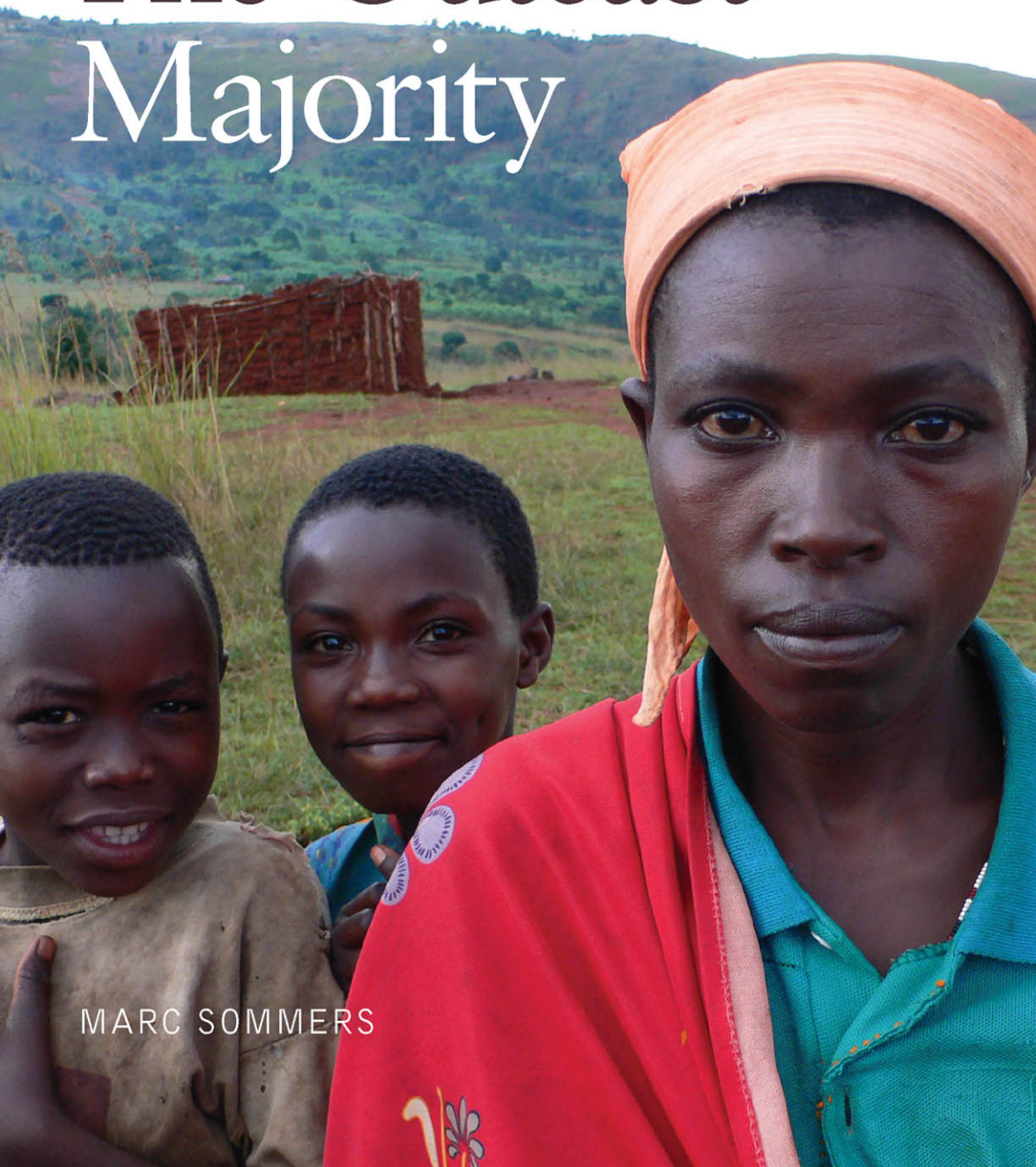


WAR, DEVELOPMENT, AND YOUTH IN AFRICA

The Outcast Majority

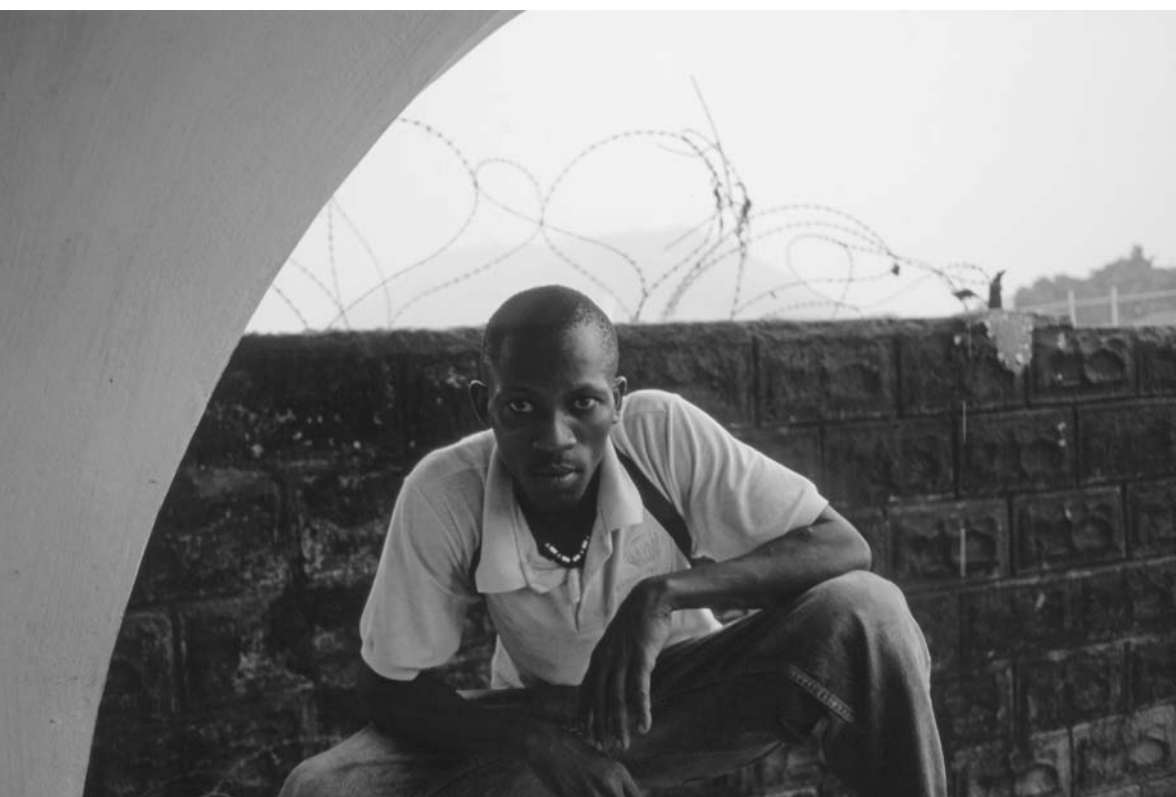


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The Outcast Majority



The Outcast Majority

WAR, DEVELOPMENT, AND YOUTH IN AFRICA

Marc Sommers

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Preface

This book is born of a growing sense that the status quo won't work. Enormous youth cohorts containing many who feel socially sidelined calls for a response that, at best, is sporadically seen. The too-common separateness of many ordinary youth raises questions about hallowed development concepts like "community" and "civil society." Popular macroeconomic remedies for postwar African states tend to run counter to youth ambitions, toward developing rural agriculture and the formal sector while youth increasingly rush into cities and the informal economy. Domestic politics and other influences, moreover, frequently lead powerful donor agencies in faraway headquarters offices to develop priorities that are not the priorities of youth majorities. Often funds and activities are funneled into sectoral "stovepipes" or "silos" that determine in advance what will be done. People making policies that will affect youth may have little or no direct interaction with them. Elemental factors like class separation, gender difference, and police behavior may be sidestepped. Rationales for programs available to tiny minorities of youth populations may be questionable or unclear. And once initiatives get to the field, a pronounced orientation toward results usually ensues: countable indicators, outputs, and outcomes determine, to a large degree, what will constitute success. The insular process may make it difficult to figure out whether or not the initiatives left a positive, negative, or negligible impact on the people known as beneficiaries and the many more who didn't make the cut.

The presence of unprecedented numbers of young people in developing countries is not the most significant challenge to governments and international development agencies. Their alienation is. Exclusion is structured into education and cultural systems: most youth in many countries are unlikely to get to secondary school or gain acceptance as adults. Wars exacerbate their

sense of separation, and not just by distancing them from traditional mores, customs, and practices. Wars also accelerate change. In many ways, youth in war and postwar Africa are learning new skills, assuming new identities, shifting to urban areas in large numbers, and shedding, when they can, traditional cultural mandates that are confining or seem passé. Conjuring male youth as dangerous and overlooking female youth doesn't square with realities in which young people, among many other things, resist engagement in violence, develop remarkable talents, and experience inclusion within excluded worlds. The world of war is terrible and transformative, inviting realizations and providing opportunities to rework what it means to be young in Africa today: how you become an adult and relate to the opposite sex, who you listen to, how you deal with your past, what you do, where you hope to go.

The Outcast Majority aims to shed penetrating light on the lives of war-affected African youth and the workings of international development. The effort begins with a discussion of the conditions, experiences, abilities, and forces that shape and propel the lives of African youth today, particularly those undergoing or emerging from war. They are contrasted with forces that influence and constrain today's international development aid enterprise. It ends by addressing the gap that lies between, proposing a framework for transforming established practice and empowering severely underestimated young people in a way that promises to make aid significantly more relevant, effective, and inclusive generally and specifically with regard to youth in war-affected Africa and elsewhere.

This book's broad scope integrates two main sources of material. The first is interview data with youth in many war-affected African countries, African government and international agency officials, and development, youth, and evaluation experts. The second is archival research into the many subjects and concerns that make up the book's coverage. The collective result is complementary: a series of passages featuring in-depth, firsthand analysis drawn from fieldwork in an array of countries and contexts interwoven into a narrative that covers a wide range of critical issues.

The Outcast Majority invites policy makers, practitioners, academics, students, and others to think about three commanding contemporary issues—war, development, and youth—in new ways. It encourages thoughtful reflection on what should be done for booming populations of youth, and not just those in nations affected by conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. In today's increasingly youth-dominated world, the issues and proposed reforms detailed here are relevant to other places where vast and vibrant youth cohorts reside.

Acknowledgments

Three events spurred the idea and development of this book. The first was in 2009, when I was invited to a dinner featuring recent graduates of a renowned graduate school for international relations. All had taken up interesting and important positions in government and nongovernment institutions, many in the international development field. I realized, over dinner and in conversation afterward, that they did not have much awareness of or interest in the impassioned debates arising from books by well-known development experts. Nor did I gauge much curiosity about what it meant to be poor. The general focus of the former students was on how you get things done.

In 2010, I applied for a fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to write this book. Many years of work with youth and international development agencies had illuminated a gap between what most youth need and what international development agencies normally provide. I proposed to write a book on the mismatch and how the development approach might be improved.

In 2011, when I received word that the Wilson Center would offer me a fellowship starting later that year, I was already working on an internal study for an international development agency on the state of marginalized young people and what might be done to improve their situation. My research and analysis for the study allowed me to begin probing the divergence I had proposed to write about at the Wilson Center.

It's unlikely that I could have written this book without the opportunity to become a Wilson Center fellow. My tenure allowed me to develop my analysis of the situation of war-affected African youth and how international development agencies responded to youth challenges. I also began to conceptualize what an enhanced response might entail.

But in addition, my book writing benefited immensely from the support

and collegiality I received. The Africa Program staff at the time—Steve McDonald, Mame-Khady Diouf, and Derek Langford, together with Alyson Lyons of the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity—warmly welcomed me into the fold, always with generosity, from the get-go. So did the tirelessly helpful and upbeat Wilson Center staff charged with supporting my fellowship, from Kimberly Conner and Arlyn Charles to Krishna Aniel, Louisa Clark, and Lindsay Collins. The library team (Janet Spikes, Dagne Gizaw, and Michelle Kamalich) was unstintingly professional and gracious. I thank them all, and countless other staff members (including David Biette, Joseph Brinley, Geoffrey Dabelko, Kent Hughes, Robert Litwak, John Milewski, Blair Ruble, Drew Sample, and John Tyler) for their assistance and good cheer, as well as Jane Harmon, the Wilson Center’s director, president, and CEO, and Michael Van Dusen, senior advisor to the president for alumni relations (and former executive vice president and chief operating officer), for their leadership.

My fellow fellows were marvelous colleagues. In particular, I came to know and appreciate the scholarship and friendship of Roberto Briceño-León, Rochelle Davis, Maurice Jackson, Karthick Ramakrishnan, and my wonderful Africanist colleague, Robert Baum, as well as my fifth-floor neighbors: Luis Pásara, Xuefei Ren, Kathleen Vogel, Yafeng Xia, Ahmet Yüklelen, and, especially, Fabio Rugge. I also greatly appreciated exchanging ideas with William Milam, Aaron David Miller, and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, among many other dynamic fellows and scholars at the Wilson Center.

I received superb and essential assistance in the development of archival research for this book. At the Wilson Center, I received support from three terrific interns: Trung Le, Ashley Newton, and Madeline Vellturo, who volunteered to pitch in and was a significant contributor. All of their work is deeply appreciated, in addition to the sterling contributions of three former Fletcher School students and research assistants: Rebekah Mierau, Justin Shilad, and Michele Wehle.

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I thank Peter Buckland, Jeff Crisp, Mattias Lundberg, Cecily Sommers, and Peter Uvin for sacrificing their time to read sections of this book and provide uniformly helpful commentary. I wish to express my gratitude to Lansana Sheriff, also known as Steady Bongo, for granting permission to cite lyrics from his wonderful “Youthman” song in this book. My sincere thanks as well to the University of Georgia Press for their help in bringing this book to the finish line, particularly Assistant Director for Acquisitions and Editor-in-Chief Mick Gusinde-Duffy, whose enthusiasm and support for the book remains appreciated. The contributions from the two blind reviewers were exceedingly helpful as well.

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The Outcast Majority

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Demography and Alienation

The Shaky Status Quo

One unavoidably confronts Africa's demographic realities soon after arriving on the continent. After moving through airport customs and heading into a capital city, it is impossible not to notice youth everywhere. Lining the streets, angling alongside vehicles to sell sunglasses, watches, and batteries at traffic intersections, sitting idly under shade trees, Africa's unprecedentedly youthful population and its rocketing urbanization are absolutely manifest. One distortion in this view is that it may seem that nearly all youth are male, since their female counterparts tend to be much less publicly prominent.

The sense of burgeoning youth populations and mushrooming cities is accentuated in war and postwar nations in sub-Saharan Africa, where most governments are works in progress, economies wobble, rural villages are frequently forbidding, cities are teeming hotspots, and young people are absolutely ascendant—partly because of their huge numbers and partly because some were the war's primary perpetrators or victims (or both). In these circumstances, thronging youth may inspire a sense that things are unsettled if not unsafe.

Just what do all these young people want? In such fluid situations, how might their drives and aspirations be addressed? Before explaining how this book addresses these vital and interlocked questions, let me begin with a couple of examples that illuminate two of the many dimensions of the youth challenge and the weaknesses in current responses to it.

The first took place in Sierra Leone, while I was carrying out field research with youth in 2010. This small West African nation, about the size of Ireland but with a slightly larger population, may have a greater focus on youth than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa.¹ It also continues to recover from a

devastating civil war (1991–2002). The war itself was immortalized, after a fashion, by the movie *Blood Diamond*, in which virtually every male youth appeared to be irrational, violent, armed with an AK, and high as a kite on drugs. While that cinematic stereotype was wildly off target—a minority of today’s young men get involved in wars, even at their height (Barker and Ricardo 2006: 181)—the steady focus on youth in Sierra Leone is apt. Indeed, my 2010 field research in Sierra Leone revealed a government and international agency contingent entirely aware of the nation’s burgeoning population of youth in need of support. Members of the poor and marginalized youth majority whom I interviewed in the city of Kenema, for example, spoke often about their goal of participating in an employment training program for youth. Yet the chances of gaining access to the program were low—and not only because there were few slots and high demand for them.

There also were charges of blatant bias. One international agency had a high-profile youth training program operating in chieftainships around Kenema. Reportedly, chiefs chose the participants. Kenema youth and program officials alike stated that nepotism drove access into the treasured program. Some of those whom the chiefs selected weren’t even youth. Program officials explained that chiefs couldn’t afford to pay supporters, so becoming a program participant became compensation in another form. The practice certainly didn’t strike the program officials as inappropriate: it’s an accepted and long-standing custom, they told me. To them, the selection process created no real problem.

Not quite. In a context where vast numbers of poor youth desperately sought access to such programs as a way to jump-start their employment prospects, youth watched the program closely. After seeing who got into the program, the youth’s next step was to see what came afterward. It appeared that the result was yet again watching the favored few reap unjust rewards. In other words, a program that positively affected youth participants ran the risk of negatively affecting large numbers of young people who were not in the program. In unsteady Sierra Leone, a country with enduring legacies of inequality, corruption, and violent resistance, such a result promises to exacerbate youth anger and fatalism in the face of still more elite favoritism.

Two years before my 2010 fieldwork in Sierra Leone, I was finalizing extensive field research with youth in Rwanda. In some ways, the two countries could not be more different. For example, Rwanda’s government is overbearingly authoritarian, while the awareness of Rwandan youth about youth programs is usually nonexistent. But in other ways, Rwanda and its

West African counterpart have potent similarities. Both are exceptionally young and impoverished postwar African nations. The governments and their international partners, in addition, appear to share an uneven awareness of the lives and imperatives of ordinary youth. Briefing a succession of major donor agencies about my findings in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, revealed that donor officials were startled by the two most pressing concerns facing nearly all Rwandan youth: that the country faced a housing crisis, and as a result, youth were unable to attain adulthood. While many shared their awareness that the youth situation in Rwanda was serious, they were unaware of the details (Sommers 2012b: 223). Since every low and midlevel Rwandan government official whom I'd interviewed had confirmed both findings, I had assumed that high-level donor officials knew about them too. But the adulthood and housing crises that were unavoidably and entirely obvious to government officials on the ground were not apparent to the government's primary partners (221–222, 193).

This is what the status quo can yield: the use of accepted procedures and approaches that overlook or underestimate critical concerns. Even so, how could donor experts based in Rwanda, aided by reams of studies on numerous dimensions of human activity, be almost completely uninformed about the alarming predicament facing most youth there? This provokes a more elemental question: are programs for finite numbers of youth even appropriate, since only a tiny fraction of young people in need stand to benefit and many more may feel, yet again, left out? Just what should governments and donor agencies do, in short, to aid young people in war-affected sub-Saharan Africa, where youth populations are colossal and nearly all governments are weak? The challenge is made all the more daunting by a virtually overlooked irony: while youth are demographically dominant, most see themselves as members of an outcast minority.²

The separateness of many young citizens gives rise to still more basic questions. If so many young people consider themselves outsiders, what does this say about accepted notions of mainstream society and community membership? Who actually understands and represents multitudes of excluded youth? How can their diverse talents be utilized? What might their presence mean for governments and their international benefactors?

The chasm between a significant and mostly detached population of young people, on the one hand, and government and international development policies that frequently do not support their priorities or recognize their talents, on the other, sets the stage for the central argument of this book: that

the gap between ordinary youth priorities and government and international development action in war-affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa is so vast that dramatic change is needed. In too many cases, current responses are either ineffectual or inadvertently make matters worse for young people by exacerbating social and economic inequalities and further alienating youth. Fashioning policies and programs that align with the imperatives of ordinary youth and emphasize inclusion promises to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of government and international development work. Assessing whether policies and programs overlook or undermine ordinary youth priorities, or unintentionally exclude vast numbers of youth, serves this purpose. So does the need to uncover youth's often-hidden skill sets and to gauge and respond to the impact of gender, class divisions, and urbanization on youth lives and trajectories. Doing all this not only calls for a frank and constructive reassessment of current agendas and actions that may ultimately weaken and even undermine sincere efforts to engage with war-affected youth. It also requires a new framework for addressing youth concerns in war-affected sub-Saharan Africa and well beyond.

The way forward is straightforward: uncovering the priorities and potential of ordinary youth before fashioning responses to them. Rarely does this approach appear to be operationalized. In at least some postwar sub-Saharan African countries, such as Rwanda and South Sudan, governments are more inclined to do the opposite: deciding on government priorities for youth majorities without any consultation with or study of ordinary youth. It was not uncommon for Rwandan government officials, for example, to consider “uneducated” youth (that is, the approximately 95 percent of all Rwandan youth who had no education beyond primary school) as resistant to changes that they deemed good for them and to label them ignorant. As one official stated, “The most difficult thing to do is to make youth do something. When I talk to youth, I call them and tell them what to do” (Sommers 2012b: 78). In a similar vein, a powerful official of the ruling party in South Sudan explained in a 2011 interview that “the youth [of South Sudan] need to be directed to find their voices.” As these examples illustrate, a common government approach to youthful citizens, particularly those with no more than primary school education, was to cajole or push them to change their ways. Government officials with smarts, experience, and education rarely start by asking youth of low education and status what they want. They tell youth what youth should do.

To be sure, governments and international institutions have to deal with an array of pressures and agendas. Youth is but one of them. But “youth” is effectively a predominant concern, as it lies at or near the heart, in war and postwar Africa as well as many other nations, of many core interests. Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Rwanda, to name a handful of war and postwar African examples, all have inordinately young populations: approximately three in four citizens of all five nations are under age thirty (Leahy et al.: 2007: 87, 89–90).³ In such youth-dominated societies, young people constitute the majority of soldiers, students, and consumers, in addition to most criminals, prostitutes, and HIV/AIDS-infected citizens (indeed, most people who are targeted in health programs are likely to be young). Many if not most urban residents, as well as members of the unemployed, are youth too. And so on: if only by the sheer size of their cohorts, youth predominate across programs and much of everyday life.

While youth in war and postwar sub-Saharan Africa influence societies by what they do and where they are headed, finding an effective way to support them requires an understanding of the marginalization, exclusion, and sense of alienation that so many experience. Seeing themselves as social outliers naturally informs the identities and directions that youth develop, and although contexts differ, an array of contributing factors is commonplace. Probably the most significant emerges from the fact that most African youth will never enter a secondary school. Normally, secondary school slots are reserved only for those who can do four things: complete primary school, excel in the national examinations that conclude primary school, find a way to pay for secondary school, and, especially if the school is far from home, avoid substantial risk while commuting to and from school. Usually only a fraction of youth can do all four, and the proportion is likely to be even smaller in war and postwar nations. As Chaffin notes, “Education has been established as a core service in emergencies and post-conflict, but mostly at the primary level. Youth [ages] 15–24 are usually left out” (2010: 8).

The drive of developing countries and international agencies to attain universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 has become a focus of worldwide effort and concern. Embodied as “Goal 2” of both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All goals, the push to UPE is making demonstrable progress. “More children are in primary school than ever before,” a UNICEF document proudly pronounces. “For the period 2003–2008,

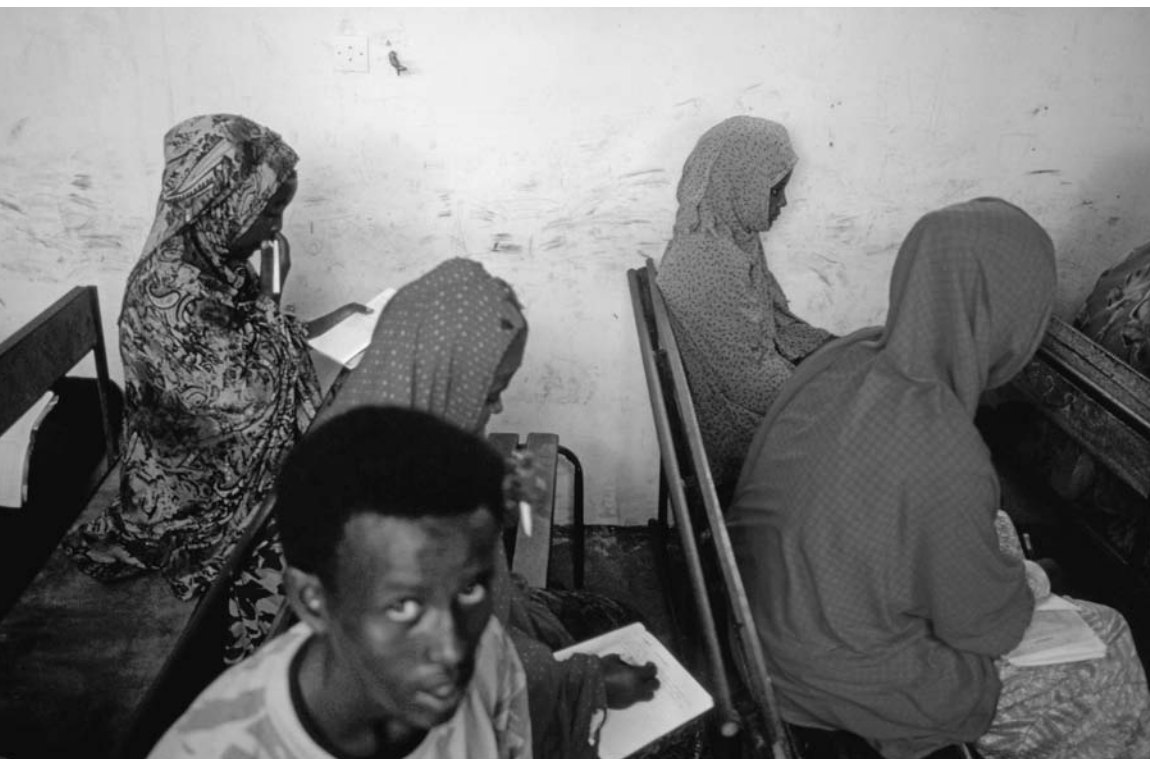
net primary school enrolment rose to 88 per cent for the developing world as a whole” (2010: 1). But after primary school, the bottom drops out. Since most youth of secondary school age cannot enter secondary school, their movement into marginalization can be swift. In Sierra Leone, for example, young people who never went to secondary school are called “dropouts,” which youth and adults reported is both an offensive and a commonplace term (private interviews, 2005 and 2010). In Rwanda, people with no more than a primary school education are simply deemed “uneducated” or “ignorant” (Sommers 2012b).

Indeed, unintentionally or not (my sense is that it is nearly always unintentional), many if not most education systems in Africa and elsewhere practice systemic exclusion, effectively excluding most youth from secondary school because the number of those who can attend is so limited. This is reflected in net attendance ratios for secondary school. In the sub-Saharan region generally, nearly three in four secondary school-age youth (71 percent) do not attend. In war-affected states, the proportion of youth who cannot enter secondary school is even higher. In Sierra Leone, for example, roughly four in five do not (81 percent). In Rwanda, nineteen out of every twenty secondary school-age youth (95 percent) do not attend secondary school (UNICEF 2011: 133, 132). The following table illuminates the drop-off, by gender, between primary and secondary school in eight war-affected African nations:

TABLE 1
Net attendance ratios, by gender and education level

Country	Net primary school attendance (%)		Net secondary school attendance (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Burundi	72	70	8	6
Côte D'Ivoire	66	57	32	22
Democratic Republic of the Congo	63	60	30	24
Liberia	41	39	21	18
Rwanda	84	87	5	5
Sierra Leone	69	69	21	17
Somalia	25	21	9	5
Uganda	83	82	16	15

Source: UNICEF 2011: 104–106.

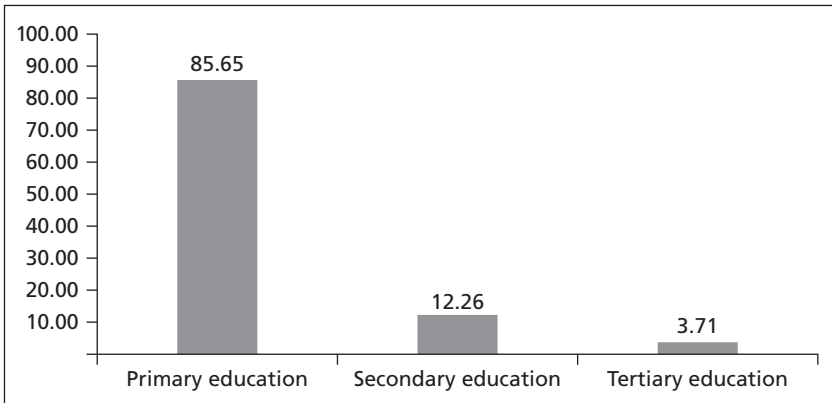


In 1994, with most schools closed in the heat of Somalia's civil war, a small number of youth attend a makeshift secondary school in Mogadishu.

The difference in attendance by gender often is not particularly significant for children in primary school. This points to genuine and noteworthy success in movement toward gender parity in primary school education in these eight countries and well beyond. However, the attendance drop-off between primary and secondary school for adolescent girls and female youth tends to be higher than for their male counterparts (the exception is Rwanda, where secondary school attendance is alarmingly low for both). It is an indication of what appears to be a generally reliable rule of thumb: that as children become youth, the proportion of those who are marginalized tends to be higher among females than males. This is only one of a host of ways in which gender differences among youth is a vital category for comparative analysis and a guide for concerted action.

Although the following school enrollment data does not incorporate gender differences, analyzing all three education levels underscores what is, effectively, the systemic exclusion of most youth from educational opportunities. As the following data from Angola and Burundi illustrates, enrollment

FIGURE 1
School enrollment ratios in Angola, 2010

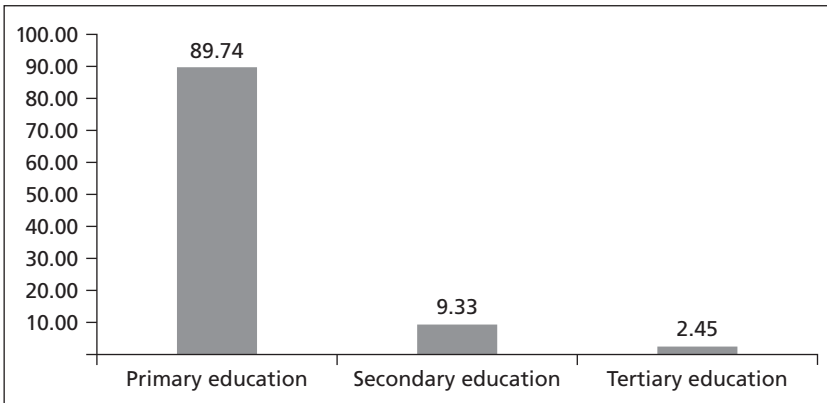


Source: World Bank 2011a.

in school falls off a cliff between primary and secondary school. This cutoff marks—in tangible, concrete terms—the onset of social and economic marginalization for most youth. The data also illuminates that the proportion of tertiary school-aged youth who are actually at a university or some other postsecondary education institution is miniscule (see figures 1 and 2).

Still other factors can inspire a sense of separation as a permanent part of the social landscape. Most youth will never enter a youth program, as unit costs tend to be high and only a small proportion of young people can get in. Jobs are hard to find, and you may need an inside connection to get one. In addition, trying to reach adulthood or gain a modicum of economic and social stability may be difficult if not impossible to obtain. Landownership of any kind, too, is very likely hard to achieve, most particularly for female youth. Marriages, when they occur, mainly constitute unofficial, unrecognized, informal arrangements. Within or outside such unsanctioned unions, it appears safe to say that most youth will very likely become parents at some point.⁴ Then there is the way in which young people's war experiences can distance them from others in society. Explaining how "war had a huge effect on Liberia's young people," for example, Christopher Maclay and Alpaslan Özerdem state that "a combination of violence, displacement and chaos provided youth with a perverse upbringing, and removed many of them from typical civilian life." They further state that "disconnection is closely

FIGURE 2
School enrollment ratios in Burundi, 2007



Source: World Bank 2011b.

related to marginalization” (2010: 346). There are, in addition, “multiple dimensions of exclusion” that influence war-affected youth, which combine economic, political, social, and cultural factors (McLean Hilker and Fraser 2009: 10).⁵ Taken together, these factors can negatively and profoundly impact the lives of many young citizens and thus directly influence the security, health, and development prospects of a nation. Implicit in the argument in this book is that starting with preset priorities, together with the sectoral “stovepiping” of money and action, can look a lot like social engineering to young people and conflict with what youth must do. This is an unintentionally counterproductive approach, and, I will argue, it should be reversed.

This book focuses on youth in war-affected African states. However, it does so with the awareness that many of the concerns that are addressed, such as notions of youth, the acumen youth develop, the workings of international development, and some of the conditions and challenges war-affected youth face, resonate to youth situations in other parts of Africa and elsewhere. The book thus spotlights war-affected African youth to shed light on their lives and imperatives as well as, more generally, those of youth in Africa and other parts of the world. The analysis of international development is designed to identify ways to improve approaches to aiding youth, including war-affected African youth, and to generally build on the

increasing awareness of, concern for, and action to address extreme poverty, exclusion, and inequality.

With this in mind, *The Outcast Majority* is organized in the following way. The remainder of this chapter examines the complicated category of “youth.” It provides context for how today’s youth demographics can affect perceptions of young people. Chapter 1 concludes with an explanation of the methods for research and analysis that I have employed in writing this book. Chapter 2 sets the stage for subsequent discussion by reviewing wartime experiences and what war does to youth physically and psychologically. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the divergence between, on the one hand, war-affected youth priorities, orientations, and talents, and on the other, the priorities, policies, and practices of international development agencies. In chapter 3 I consider four concerns that shape and often drive the lives and imperatives of young people in war and postwar Africa. In chapter 4 I focus on the forces that sculpt and limit how international aid agencies conceive of and address youth challenges. Chapter 5 highlights the main contrasts between these two sets of actors. Chapter 6 builds on the growing international concern for youth by introducing a framework for reforming youth work and enhancing the effectiveness, relevance, and inclusiveness of development practice and policy.

Definitions and Difference

A fundamental reason why youth are so misunderstood and support for them is so underwhelming is that nobody seems entirely sure just who they are. The definitions that many experts have drummed up invite confusion because they conflict. Governments and international agencies typically rely on age ranges to determine who youth are. While that may seem simple enough, the result is a muddle. One problem arises from the fact that there is no agreement on what those ages should be. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN), for example, explains that “the United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines ‘youth’, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States” (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2011). African member states, and citizens of those states, often have their own ideas. Sierra Leone, for example, has a national youth policy that “targets citizens ages 15 to 35” (Gavin 2007: 70)⁶ Yet Gavin notes that Sierra Leo-

neans themselves “sometimes use the term ‘youth’ to describe people in their 40s—this in a country where average life expectancy for males is about 38” (2007: 70). Some researchers have their own ideas: Richards, for example, defines youth in West Africa as “those of school age or preparing for and seeking first employment”—in other words, he says, everyone ages five to twenty-five (2006: 198).

A second problem stems from the fact that many categories of young people overlap. ECOSOC, for example, defines “children” as “those persons under the age of 14,” which neatly fits alongside its age range for youth (15–24). But ECOSOC also observes that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as “persons up to the age of 18” (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2011). Rosen illuminates a critical problem with this definition. In his view, “a single universal definition of *childhood* in both international humanitarian and human rights law” conflicts with the absence of “universal experience or understanding of childhood” (2007: 297; emphasis in original). The idea that childhood ends and adulthood begins at age eighteen subordinates local definitions of the two concepts and excludes the youth category altogether.

ECOSOC’s observations illustrate international efforts to overlook such contradictions and omissions. For example, ECOSOC notes that “within the category of ‘youth,’” there are young adults (ages twenty to twenty-four) as well as teenagers (ages thirteen to nineteen)—even though teens aged thirteen and fourteen are too young to fall within the UN age range for youth (fifteen to twenty-four) (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2011). The confusion only expands if the UN definition for “adolescent” is added to the mix: individuals who are ten to nineteen years old (UNICEF 2011: 8).⁷ The following table illuminates what happens when various stages of young lives are transformed into age ranges:

TABLE 2
United Nations definitions of young people by age

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Age range</i>
Child	0–17 or 0–14
Adolescent	10–19
Teenager	13–19
Young adult	20–24
Youth	15–24

ECOSOC illuminates a still-broader jumble regarding youth definitions by noting that “the operational definition and nuances of the term ‘youth’ often vary from country to country, depending on the specific socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors” (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2011). In fact, cultural conceptions of youth, while they may refer to age, primarily define “youth” as the life phase between childhood and adulthood. The youth identity, in this context, is fundamentally liminal, as it is “a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state” (Turner 1969: 94). “Youthhood” embodies the cultural and social transformation of a person moving out of childhood and to the edge of adulthood.

Whether a young person can reach adulthood and remain there differs according to the society and the situation of particular youth. As Bucholtz observes, “Youth as a cultural stage often marks the beginning of a long-term, even lifelong, engagement in particular cultural practices” (2002: 526). Eguavoen uses the phrase “adults without adult status” to characterize this sort of prolonged struggle to become a socially recognized adult, which the author defines as “individuals who have not succeeded in establishing themselves socially as adults by getting married, finding their own household and/or being able to take economic care of themselves and dependants.” The need to economically provide for others has led to an alarming trend: “The group of people who fail to become social adults because of poverty is constantly growing in number, as well as in age” (2010: 268).

While the adulthood challenge and the looming threat of failure are examined in depth in chapter 3, some understanding of the difficulties youth face is required in this consideration of youth definitions for one simple reason: the youth identity is increasingly difficult to escape. Escape is so difficult, in Africa and elsewhere, that new terms have been invented to characterize the trap that youth so often face and the growing invalidity of traditional youth definitions. Singerman has coined one of them: “waithood,” which applies to Egyptian and other Middle Eastern youth who are “waiting” to become adults through marriage, which, without sufficient funds, may not occur (2007: 6). This widespread struggle to marry was embodied in a song that became a kind of protest anthem for the Cairo youth who demonstrated against Egypt’s former president Mubarak early in 2011. “I want to marry,” the song, by a group called Downtown, explained, “but I’ve got no money” (Shadid 2011: 13).

A term that has arisen in West Africa is critical to this discussion for two

reasons. First, it incorporates failure and social separation into the youth identity. Second, it is tied only to male youth, whose failure to escape youthhood can be both public and searing. The term is “youthman,” and it has at least two sources (though probably many more exist). One is the title and content of a song by a Sierra Leonean singer known as Steady Bongo (as well as Lansana Sheriff). “The system is bad for the youthman today,” Steady Bongo sings,

Every day and every night they suffer
The youthman want to sleep but no place
The youthman want to eat but no food
The youthman want good dress but no good dress
The youthman want to buy but no money.
The youthman want to work
If no work, how do you expect him to eat?⁸

A second source is the Nigerian scholar Abubakar Momoh (1999), whom Utas cites in his description of how marginalization and failed adulthood are interwoven. Using the case of male urban youth in Monrovia, Utas describes the rise of Liberia’s youthmen: “Due to economic crisis and increasing dependence on the central state in the 1980s an ever-growing number of young people in urban and semi-urban environments were excluded even from the possibilities of becoming adults. Possibilities to participate in the wage economy diminished and education ceased having any importance. With this crisis looming, many young men lost even the possibility to establish themselves as adults, by building a house, or getting married—even though they continued to become fathers, of children for whom they could not provide” (2005b: 150). In both of these descriptions, there is the sense that failed adulthood is publicly witnessed and implacably, unavoidably permanent. While Steady Bongo highlights a punishing economic system as the cause of the youthman’s desperation, Utas highlights an even broader source: “structural marginalisation,” which, as his description suggests, has cultural, political, and economic roots: rigid cultural criteria that stipulate the constituents of adulthood, a state that provides less and less to its citizens, and a weak economy. As a result, in chronological terms the people Utas describes “outgrew youth, but socially they became ‘youthmen’” (150). They may look like adults. But in Liberian society and in so many others, they aren’t.

Even when male youth do achieve socially accepted manhood, their success may not be lasting. Eguavoen states this additional difficulty succinctly:

“As if this individual establishment as a social adult was not enough of a challenge, there is growing empirical evidence that the social status of adulthood may be reversed if the individual falls back into poverty, which means that young adults are socially delegated back to youth status and, as a direct consequence, denied full adult rights, again resulting in low social status and limited access to resources and political decision making” (2010: 268). In practice, the youth identity regularly connects to social instability and the very real threat of public failure—even after one becomes an adult. It is here where youth definitions and the prospect of humiliation and collapse are linked. Being or remaining a youth is frequently encircled by social expectations that cannot be met. Defining young people as youth, in Africa and many other world regions, must entail more than an age range or a culturally delineated transformation period. It has to encompass the possibility that being a youth too often becomes a kind of inescapable curse, in which people grow uncomfortably older without entering or maintaining adulthood. Although Abbink warns that there are many Africans “who have had to delay their entry into adulthood: they feel excluded and powerless, and struggle to survive” (2005: 6), Utas and others note that, increasingly, there is more than simply a delay. There is only *waithood* without end. As Honwana observes, “In Africa young people in *waithood* live mainly in the present.” Instead of pointing to the future, “their everyday present becomes their life, and they focus on the here and now” (2012: 30).

Accordingly, and for the purposes of this book, “youth” will be defined simply as a young person with a tenuous social status and a hoped-for social transformation into adulthood. Which may not happen. Since the prospect of failing to secure adulthood is increasingly commonplace in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere, I will employ a related set of terms for most youth in a country cohort. In this book, “ordinary youth,” “nonelite youth,” “marginalized youth,” “excluded youth,” and “alienated youth” will merely constitute different contours of conditions that affect overwhelming majorities of young people.

No discussion of youth definitions can be complete without explicit reference to gender. A short recollection illustrates the significance of this issue. In a taxi taking me from Nairobi’s Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to a hotel, my conversation in Kiswahili with the driver turned to fatherhood. “How many do you have?” I inquired. “Three,” he proudly began. “Two youth and one girl.” All three children were in their late teens or early twenties. This description is altogether commonplace and concerning, because it highlights

how the youth definition routinely refers to males much more than females. Indeed, the linkage between “youth” and “female” in Africa is rarely automatic. Shepler states the issue succinctly. “When most people talk about ‘youth’ in Africa,” she relates, “they usually mean young men” (2010: 100). Speaking of African youth generally, Mabala supports Shepler’s take, asserting that “the very concept of youth is not very gender sensitive as it is automatically applied more to young men than to young women.” The culturally assigned reason for this tendency to overlook or even omit females from the youth category is as pervasive as it is influential: “While a young man who is married may still be regarded as a youth, once a young woman is married or has a child, she is often excluded from this category. A teenage mother, who lacks seniority among women, may also lose any realistic chance of access to programming and opportunities for youth, while a 34 year-old man (who may have made her pregnant) continues to bask in his ‘youthhood’” (2011: 159).

The fog over where mothers in their teens and early twenties properly belong is debated and frequently deleterious to young mothers. Are they female youth or young women? Since they have children, as Mabala underscores, it is much more likely that they will be defined as women, not girls (much less youth). The absence of their seniority as women, moreover, means that young mothers are likely to be underrepresented in youth and women’s groups alike. Alarming, it also suggests that their vulnerability to discrimination, “stemming mainly from patriarchal traditional norms” and already high for African women generally (Olayanju et al. 2013: 110), is likely to be exacerbated due to their limited representation in civil society. Indeed, regardless of whether female youth are mothers, the tendency for female youth in general to be overlooked is a disturbing yet strong trend. As Mabala has noted, “If women are a disempowered majority and young people are an invisible majority, girls and young women stand at the interface of gender and generation. They have far less power and resources than older women and are even more invisible than adolescent boys and young men” (2006: 412). Many in the international security community implicitly support the pronounced tendency for the youth term to mainly if not exclusively refer to males. As to development experts, a Western donor official remarked that “when you talk about gender, you’re talking about women and girls, while youth is largely about young men. In practice, that’s what the terms mean.”

The idea that female youth are not youth, or are somehow less significant or important youth, is as perverse, persistent, and counterproductive as the idea that the gender of males matters less than that of their female counterparts.

Rather than highlighting the obvious overlap between gender and youth, the working definitions of the terms present the two categories as much more adversarial than complementary. Small wonder, then, that both gender and youth concerns are often secondary in development circles. “Youth is separate from gender in the donor world,” the veteran official continued. Furthermore, as I will discuss in chapter 4, both are “cross-cutting issues” (although gender is far more established than youth), operating between or among sector stalwarts like education and health. This makes a focus on either difficult to operationalize, since, as the official noted about donor agencies, emphasizing sectors “is how we work.”

How has the complicated and confusing relationship between gender and youth affected how female and male youth are defined? Female youth appear to exist in a kind of institutional netherworld, often becoming both lesser youth and overlooked constituents of the gender outpost. Meanwhile, the heavy accent on masculinity in explicit and, especially, implicit youth definitions is partly due to arguments and evidence linking youth bulge demographics to political violence. In such scenarios, male youth unquestionably take center stage. I will now address this issue.

Demographics and Emotion

African cities have inspired purple prose from journalists, visitors, and scholars. Take the following from the journalist George Packer, writing about Lagos, the Nigerian megacity: “Beyond the sawmills, the old waterfront markets, the fishermen’s shanties, the blackened façades of high-rise housing projects, and the half-abandoned skyscrapers of downtown Lagos Island loom under a low, dirty sky. Around the city, garbage dumps steam with the combustion of natural gases, and auto yards glow with fires from fuel spills. All of Lagos seems to be burning” (2006: 1). Notwithstanding the efforts of Packer and others, it is hard to beat Kaplan for a sense of revulsion for urban Africa: “One’s first memorable experience of West Africa, as with so many new places, is through smell. I remember noticing it in the Treichville market, which I visited the very day I got off the plane in Abidjan [Côte d’Ivoire]—an odor of sour sweat, rotting fruit, hot iron and dust, urine drying on sun-warmed stone, feces, and fly-infested meat in an immovable field of damp heat” (1996: 16). For Kaplan, African cities not only attack the senses, but they also represent the absence of culture. Take, for instance, his

comparison of African “forest culture” to what exists in cities: “Whatever the drawbacks of forest culture, at least it *is* a culture. As it decays and people pour into coastal shanty-magnets, West Africa is left with high-density concentrations of human beings who have been divested of certain stabilizing cultural models, with no strong governmental institutions or communities to compensate for the loss” (29; emphasis in original). Featured players within the stew of filth and cultural chaos that Kaplan depicts are male youth. In Chicago, an Abidjan neighborhood that Kaplan calls a “slum in the bush,” the author’s gaze turns to male youth in his midst. Unemployed, they “passed the time drinking beer, palm wine, and medicinally strengthened gin while gambling on pinball games, constructed out of rotting wood and patterns of rusted nails arranged to steer the ball. These are the same youths who rob houses at night in more prosperous Ivorian neighborhoods” (19). Male youth in Chicago and other West African slums are part of what has been called “the violent nihilism of New Barbarianism” (Richards 1996: 151). Kaplan and others who share his perspective, Paul Richards relates, have interpreted much post-Cold War violence and war as a combination of “culture clash, resource competition and environmental breakdown” (xiv) that transforms poor and culturally untethered male youth, such as those in Abidjan’s Chicago, into barbaric warriors.

Scholars are hardly immune to the sense that African cities are awful and exceptionally threatening. El-Kenz writes that “everything happens in the African city” (1996: 54). These cities, he contends, have “little in common with a city as it is usually defined” and are sites where “everything is difficult, uncertain, violent.” He continues in this despairing vein: “Vast differences in standards of living and life-styles separate the well-to-do, often nouveaux riches, from the vast majority of residents. The city is cruel. Its anonymity is disconcerting, and it is difficult for people to adapt. Even the old traditions of solidarity and mutual support do not survive when confronted by money, power and force. The elderly are resigned to this state of affairs, but not the younger generation. Quite the contrary” (55). El-Kenz then launches into an argument that urban youth adapt by, essentially, absorbing Western popular culture influences into their consciousness, which only makes matters much, much worse. “The frustration of the young,” he intones, “is aggravated by imaginations which feed on television, radio and cinema.” Citing such influences as Bruce Lee, Rambo, and James Bond, El-Kenz asks, “Can [youth] be blamed if they prefer the shiny image of the Western dream to the sinister reality of daily existence?” It gets even worse: El-Kenz also contends that

African states have withdrawn from cities, leaving social vacuums that, in poorer areas of cities (which he calls “disaster zones”), youth gangs exploit for devious ends (55).

None of these images of urban Africa shed any light on why prodigious numbers of African youth continue to migrate to cities. It seems difficult, for example, for many commentators on Africa’s urban scene to grasp how something like urban anonymity may not be unsettling, as El-Kenz suggests, as much as a vital and attractive asset of urban life. Migrating to cities can shear away, or at least provide some respite from, the daunting adulthood expectations that envelop many youth lives in villages. Urban anonymity thus provides young people with opportunities to pivot past traditional mandates and fashion new identities. Such interpretations aren’t possible in the depictions of African youth by observers like Packer, Kaplan, and El-Kenz. Such onlookers mainly see youth as unsophisticated, resentful, devoid of any culture of consequence or value, easily influenced by others, and as to most male youth at least, menacing. In such depictions, African cities are not merely a mess. They host hordes of youthful denizens who seem to baffle, unsettle, and even terrify interlopers in their apparently exotic and unsavory world.

It is here, amid the welter of fear and unease, that black male African youth in cities inspire, where the discussion of youth demographics and urbanization properly begins. The reason is simple: unusual degrees of unease about rising numbers of male youth routinely tip the balance of analysis toward gloom. Analysts use demographic statistics to draw correlations and conclusions that do not account for the views of youth themselves. With this in mind, let’s begin with the facts. As of 2006, there were “1.5 billion people . . . ages 12–24 worldwide,” with “1.3 billion of them in developing countries” (World Bank 2006: 4). This made it the largest population of developing country youth that “the world has ever seen” (33). By 2025, about nine in ten of the world’s youth will reside in developing countries (Zeus 2010: 7). By 2035, there are expected to be 1.5 billion youth in the developing world, after which the youth population in most of the world will begin to decline (World Bank 2006: 33). Given these developments, “there will likely never be in human history a youth cohort this large again” (Barker 2005: 11). This unprecedented trend of youthfulness is coinciding with virtually the opposite tendency in the West, which is “getting old,” as life expectancy advances, fertility declines, and the “population pyramid is being inverted” (Freeland 2011). To put this in perspective, consider the following: “While in 1950

there were more than two Europeans for every African, by 2050 there will be almost three Africans for every European" (Freemantle 2011: 3).

Among all world regions, sub-Saharan Africa's youth demographics stand out. As Diouf notes, "Young people now constitute the majority of the African population" (2003: 2). The median age of the region's population is unusually young, standing at a mere 18.6 years (Freemantle 2011: 1). It is the only region in the world where the youth population "is projected to continue growing rapidly into the foreseeable future" (World Bank 2006: 33). This trend has been building for decades. Since 1900, sub-Saharan Africa has "experienced one of the largest [population] growth spurts ever recorded in human history." In the current era the region's birth rates "remain at almost twice that of the next highest region" (Green 2012: 243–244).⁹ Sub-Saharan Africa's youth population has more than quadrupled since 1950 (World Bank 2006: 33). Looking ahead, sub-Saharan Africa "will remain the youngest region in the world in the decades to come, and the age gap with other regions will increase" (Filmer and Fox 2014: 26). By 2050, it is estimated that "one in four workers in the world will be African" (Freemantle 2011: 1).

Sub-Saharan Africa's inordinately large and still-expanding youth population has made it a centerpiece of concern in discussions about what is known as the youth bulge. This "bulge" is thought to exist when an immoderate proportion of an adult population consists of youth. One set of authors, for example, has stated that youth bulges arise when young adults "comprise more than 40 percent of all adults." Inadvertently contributing to the pronounced confusion over youth definitions, Cincotta, Engelman, and Anastasion define youth as those aged fifteen to twenty-nine and adults as everyone aged fifteen and above (2003: 43). Although the age ranges differ, the underlying gist of the youth bulge concept is clear: population demographics become dangerously unstable when they contain unusually large numbers of youth. Perhaps not surprisingly, while the prospect of a bulge of youth in a population is in itself a worrying one (a bulge, of course, conceivably could explode), its application has invited much more unsettling conjectures.

A sampling of a growing literature here is useful. "Researchers have shown," Cincotta and Doces confidently state, "that a large proportion of young people in the working-age population are associated with elevated levels of violent crime and political violence" (2012: 102–103). A linchpin for this argument is Goldstone's book on demographics and conflict in early modern history. Goldstone argues that population growth "all across Eurasia" figured prominently in severe state crises in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,

as well as in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (1991: 460).¹⁰ Another is Huntington's assertion that "shifts in the demographic balances and youth bulges of 20 percent or more account for many of the intercivilizational conflicts of the late twentieth century" (1996: 261). Citing still another youth bulge stalwart (Gary Fuller, who allegedly coined the youth bulge label [Hendrixson 2004: 2]), Huntington's thesis is remarkably specific. He asserts that, in Sri Lanka, "the peaking" of both the Sinhalese nationalist insurgency of 1970 and the Tamil insurgency in the late 1980s "coincided exactly with the years when the fifteen-to-twenty-four-year-old 'youth bulge' in those groups exceeded 20 percent of the total population of the group" (Huntington 1996: 259). Still another set of assertions comes from a group of researchers who assert that when the proportion of males ages fifteen to twenty-nine in a population doubles, the risk of conflict increases from 4.7 percent to 31.9 percent (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2006: 15).

While it is never apparent that the conflicting age ranges and youth proportions that inform such theories are a matter of concern to the proponents of what might be called the youth bulge and instability thesis, an elemental question remains: why are male youth the target of such consternation?¹¹ Paul Collier and his colleagues answer this question with exceptional clarity: "As with criminality, rebellion relies almost exclusively upon this particular segment of the population. The most reasonable explanation for this extreme selectivity is that some young men have both an absolute advantage and a taste for violence" (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2006: 15). A second set of experts states the connection between young men and violence just as succinctly: "Why are youth bulges so often volatile? The short answer is: too many young men with not enough to do. . . . Are young males more prone to violence than older men, or than women? The preponderance of social research suggests that they are. . . . All over the world, young men (in this case, defined as aged 15 to 34) are responsible for more than three-quarters of violent crimes" (Cincotta, Engelman, and Anastasion 2003: 44). Kaplan takes a similar view. Across six West African countries, he saw "hordes" of male youth, who "were like loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting" (2000: 5). The threat the world faces today, he contends, is "elemental: *nature unchecked*" (emphasis in original). He predicts a "coming upheaval" across Africa, much of which is "set to go over the edge." Youth bulge demographics figure prominently in all of this, and it will help cause foreign embassies to close and states to collapse. Soon, Kaplan postulates, the only way to gain contact with Africa will be via "dangerous, disease-ridden coastal trading posts" (18).



On a Freetown city street during the brief lull in civil war fighting (December 1996–April 1997), two Sierra Leonean male youth pose outside a grocery store. Behind them are portraits of hallowed historical figures. Such African male youth are sometimes seen as threats to their own societies.

The statements set out here look unassailable. Young men are violent. When their numbers become excessive, they threaten their own societies. However, although most violent criminals may be male youth, most male youth are not criminals. Moreover, research has suggested that male youth are not inherently violent—it depends on context, as high testosterone levels help make them easily influenced by their peers (Rowe et al. 2004). Nonetheless, beliefs about the inherent violence and criminality within male youth populations persist. The threats they are thought to create point to particular areas of the globe: those with the highest youth bulge demographics—mainly Africa and the Middle East.¹² The embedded connection between inherent violence and African and Arab male youth is unsubtle, unfortunate, and unfounded. While this also may be unintentional, it supports truly damaging stereotypes about both.

This is not idle chat: the racial undertones in Kaplan’s work on West Africa, including in his famous 1994 article “The Coming Anarchy,” which was thought to “have greatly informed policy making in the U.S. State

Department” (Dunn 2004: 493), overlaps with and complements Princeton professor John J. DiIulio’s superpredator theory, which surfaced during the same time period. DiIulio drew on U.S. demographic and crime data to argue that, if “more boys begets more bad boys,” then “a sharp increase in the number of super crime-prone young males” would result. DiIulio focuses his attention on one particular kind of “bad boys.” “The trouble will be the greatest in black inner-city neighborhoods,” he predicts (1995). Although he later backed away from his theory—after the reverse of what he had predicted took place (E. Becker 2001)—the collective contention that male youth of color are violence-prone proved to be both powerfully influential and, quite evidently, enduring.

It is well worth examining just why male youth as a category of humans (and, allegedly, African and Arab youth in particular) are seen as a threat when a demographic threshold is crossed and there become “too many” of them. For one thing, it is difficult not to notice that the youth bulge and instability thesis is strikingly deterministic. As Roche observes, “The concept of the ‘youth bulge’ has developed from the Malthusian idea of ecological (im)balance and is now used by analysts exclusively as a politico-demographic term, with the connotation of a (male-dominated) security problem” (2010: 406). A correlation, in addition, is not necessarily causal. While correlations can highlight important associations between sets of phenomena, affixing a causal explanation to them may or may not work. In this case, stepping away from statistical data, one can begin to see how the youth bulge and instability thesis is challenged by context rather than defined by it.

As with crime, most male youth don’t get involved in warfare, either. “While the youth bulge argument is compelling,” Barker and Ricardo note, “it is important to reaffirm that in any of these settings, only a minority of young men participate in conflicts. For example, the vast majority of young men, even those unemployed and out of school, were not involved in conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone” (2006: 181). Many youth bulge and instability proponents assert that male youth out of school and work are the population component that is most likely to violently rebel. Yet most don’t, even when easy opportunities arise. This phenomenon persists, even in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone, two youthful African nations engulfed by wrenching civil war that have been, on balance, stable since the wars subsided.

Then there is the seemingly inescapable threat of urban youth. To be sure, urban Africa is expanding at an incredible rate. Caraël and Glynn make this plain. “The urban populations of sub-Saharan Africa,” they state, “have

increased by 600% in the last 35 years: a growth rate which has no precedent in human history” (2008: 124). Goldstone contends that when you mix such an upsurge of growth with youth bulge demographics, you get trouble: “According to the research of Richard Cincotta and other political demographers, countries with younger populations are especially prone to civil unrest and are less able to create or sustain democratic institutions. And the more heavily urbanized, the more such countries are likely to experience Dickensian poverty and anarchic violence” (2010). In sub-Saharan Africa, however, the connection between urbanization and violence is not manifest. From Sierra Leone and Mozambique to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, nearly all recent civil conflicts in Africa have rural, not urban, roots. As the *Economist* notes, “Africa’s worst wars, such as those in Congo, Rwanda, Sudan and Somalia, have been fought in countries where most people are peasants or livestock herders” (2011: 84). In addition, Urdal and Hoelscher found that “when we only look at the cities in Sub-Saharan Africa, *growth* in the youth population aged 15–24 is associated with a significantly lower risk of social disturbance” (2009: 17; emphasis in original). Ould-Abdallah’s observation about Burundians living in the capital city of Bujumbura in the mid-1990s, when Burundi was engulfed in a civil war rooted in extreme ethnic violence, supports the idea that more African youth in cities supports stability, not instability. Unlike in rural areas, where Burundians retain strong ethnic, regional, and clan identities, the cosmopolitan environment of Bujumbura has meant that many of its residents are “conscious of their ethnicity only in times of conflict.” Ethnic Hutu–Tutsi enmities have proven much weaker in town, leaving many “young people in the capital unable to identify with an ethnic group.” As a result, violent Hutu and Tutsi extremists during the civil war “despise[d] them because they constitute[d] living proof of the possibility of peaceful coexistence” (2000: 21).

The contextual evidence reviewed here illuminates the greatest deficiency of the youth bulge and instability thesis: the virtual absence of the views of youth themselves. Heavy reliance on quantitative data has not allowed information about the lives and perspectives of everyday youth to enlighten, situate, or perhaps even challenge the correlations. To be sure, quantitative analysis has surfaced a number of crucial facts. Urdal, to name a prominent example, has found that “youth bulges increase the risk that a country will experience domestic armed conflict” and that “the combination of youth bulges and [poor] economic performance can be explosive.” While the latter assertion might be reconsidered (many sub-Saharan African nations with

youth bulges and weak economies have remained relatively peaceful), his finding that economic performance plays a critical role in the stability of countries with youth bulges is significant. At the same time, Urdal did not find quantitative evidence to support Huntington's argument that passing a threshold of the proportion of youth in a population makes it more prone to conflict. Nor did he find statistical support for Kaplan's contention that the world "is moving toward a new age of insecurity" (2004: 16).

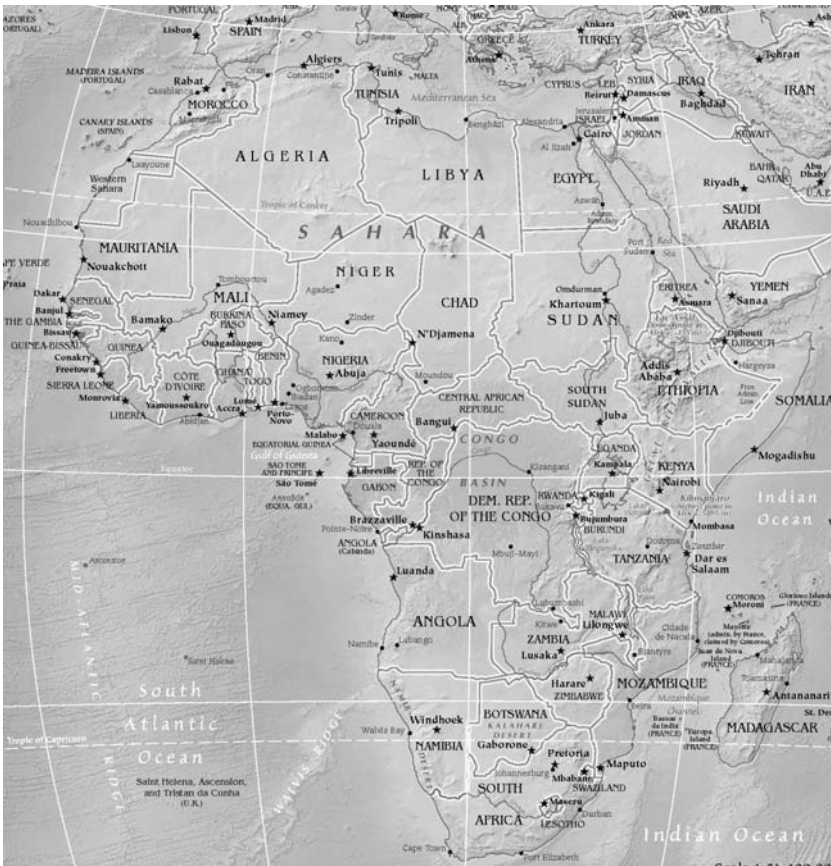
The fact that this "new age of insecurity" never arrived makes the dearth of insights from youth in discussions of demographics and threat particularly revealing. Without their contributions, we are left with incomplete pictures and distortions of everyday youth realities. This has left room for fears and uncertainties to flourish and the preoccupation with violent male youth to persist. It has also overshadowed substantial evidence to the contrary. Many nations with youth bulge demographics have remained stable. Others have emerged from war and never returned to it.

We are left with a question in need of an answer: *why are most youth peaceful?* Specifically, why, in situations where degradation, blatant inequality, punishing poverty, and structural as well as actual violence thrive, do most youth resist engagement in violence? Youth can explain this wonderful mystery. But first they have to be asked.

Researching a Moving Target

To present the evidence and support the arguments in this book, I draw from three information sources. The first is published literature. The range is broad: from research on youth during and after wars and many kinds of wartime violence to development economics and postwar practice.

The second major source is my field interviews with youth in war and postwar Africa (in this book, references to war, postwar, and war-affected Africa refer to the sub-Saharan region). Most of the countries featured in this book are those where I conducted intensive field research with youth or, in the case of refugee youth, those that were their countries of origin. The lion's share of qualitative field interviews were with ordinary youth: those residing in cities and villages, those who were former combatants, those who were refugees or among the internally displaced, those in school and, much more so, those not in school, those striving for acceptance as adults, those



Map of Africa. Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook.

looking for work. And so on: the range of youth whom I have interviewed for various research projects since 1990 is as wide as the variety of contexts from which they came. I interviewed youth in refugee camps for Burundians, Rwandans, Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, South Sudanese, and Somalis in Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda; refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in urban Tanzania, Sudan, and Gambia; and war and postwar settings in Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and South Sudan.

Highlighting qualitative field interviews with war-affected youth from seven sub-Saharan African countries allows for firsthand, in-depth material to inform the book's analysis. Incorporating published literature about Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, and Uganda into the mix enables the

book's coverage to consider Anglophone, Francophone, and to a lesser extent, Lusophone nations (with Rwanda being a tweener, having been Francophone before reinventing itself as Anglophone, and Somalia resting only partly within Anglophone Africa), as well as countries in southern, western, eastern, central, and the Horn of Africa. This material is detailed mainly in chapters 2 and 3.

A third source of information is data from qualitative interviews with officials and experts. Data from interviews with African government officials is integrated into chapter narratives. In 2011–2012, I interviewed thirteen donor officials (private, multilateral, and bilateral, including U.S. government officials from the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] and the Departments of State and Defense). All were experienced in addressing, or at least were very familiar with, youth challenges in war and postwar contexts. I also interviewed thirteen development, youth, and evaluation experts during the same time period. The experts worked either as consultants or as officials at policy institutes, UN agencies, or private international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (I subsequently interviewed two additional experts: one in 2013 and another in 2014). I also draw from relevant exchanges that arose during three public events in Washington, D.C. Two featured NGO and donor officials speaking on youth development in early 2012.¹³ A third occurred in late 2011 and focused on the challenge of reducing urban poverty.¹⁴ The extended interviews with the twenty-eight donor officials and experts (many of which required more than one interview session), together with the exchanges recorded from public events, collectively form the main information source for part 2 of chapter 4. The interviews elicited thoughtful and frequently passionate responses. Most of the officials shared a strong concern for what happened to young people during and after wars. It was also clear, in the eyes of many of the officials, that the approaches that government and nongovernment institutions mainly undertake are, in most respects, not working well. A common theme linking the views of youth, officials, and experts is frustration: with how things are done and over how most youth live.

The Wartime Template

Priorities are imperatives. They may be determined by child care responsibilities. A female youth with children and little or no support, for example, will be forced to make decisions that incorporate the need to ensure that her children are nearby. They may entail the assumption of an appointed familial role. A male youth may be expected to migrate to a city to make money so that his siblings can attend school. They may take the form of cultural mandates. Youth of both genders may leave school and dedicate themselves to marriage preparations, working to save money to, perhaps, secure livestock or contribute capital to a hoped-for marriage union. Still another imperative may entail a felt need to break away from such mandates, such as via urban migration or joining a military outfit. In these cases and many more, actions are determined by what must be done in the eyes of a young person, as determined by his or her family, social group, culture, or circumstances.

The contrast between such predetermined realities and valued preferences can be dramatic. Two commonly valued opportunities are education and training. Although young people may treasure a secondary school education or a job-training opportunity and perceive many respective benefits from each, they may not pursue either, even if opportunities arise (and they may not). Frequently, imperatives require them to look elsewhere and pursue other objectives, such as trying to meet daunting adulthood prerequisites. The distinction between priorities and values matters because, quite often, governments and agencies develop policies and programs for youth that emphasize what youth ought to do instead of what youth have to do.

The distinction between “should” and “must” is no small matter. Institutional allegiances to sectors contain implicit assumptions about what makes sense and what priorities should be. Sectors, after all, are infused with spe-

cialized rationales and predetermined logic for focused action. Education, to name just one example, promises to boost prospects for advancement. As a statement about education's exceptional utility on a World Bank Web site confidently and emphatically states, "Education has become more vital than ever before in determining how well people, their local communities, and their countries, prosper in today's global economy. The world is undergoing changes that make it much more difficult to thrive without the skills and tools that a high quality education provides. Education will determine who has the keys to the treasures the world can furnish. This is particularly important for the poor, who have to rely on their working skills and labour as the main, if not the only, means of escaping poverty" (World Bank 2012a). The point is not to challenge the thesis in this passage—or, indeed, the utility of attaining a good education, avoiding HIV/AIDS infection, eating a nutritious diet, and so forth. It is to underscore that such determinations are made without input from the target group. Reaching and effectively assisting impoverished people, be they youth or children or adults, cannot be accomplished without setting aside abstract essentials for a bit, however laudable they may be, and learning about the everyday logistics and necessities that surviving and moving beyond poverty entail. Youth may value education just as much as the World Bank authors do. But priorities and realism may point them in entirely different directions, which they may very well have no choice but to follow. Accordingly, and most unfortunately, securing more education may prove irrelevant to a great many youth. Declarations about the vital importance of education, in other words, may provide many youth with little or no help.

War quite often makes the contrast between imperatives and values even more dramatic. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on how war affects the lives, trajectories, and bodies of youth. The advent of armed conflict can radically alter the dynamics of survival and conditions for advancement. Gaining an understanding of what war does to young people sets the stage for chapter 3, where specific forces that drive youth priorities and future options are discussed. Part 1 of this chapter thus focuses on some of the direct influences of war on African youth. I start by considering what life in a war zone is like. Then I shed light on youth experiences of African wars in two ways: first by examining some general themes that researchers have found, and then by telling four stories of youth experiences during war, all drawn from field interviews. Part 2 examines how severe war experiences

can affect the bodies and psyches of young people. The featured concerns are malnutrition, brain development, and traumatic stress.

Part One: Youth in War

WAR ZONE LIFE

Interviews with those who survived wartime experiences frequently provide a picture that differs significantly from official descriptions of conflict. Wars in Africa and elsewhere may start, officially, when a rebel outfit crosses into a country, for example, or when the first attack takes place somewhere. But most people witness neither a war's beginning nor its end. Wars really commence when the fighting arrives on your doorstep, when the conflict you have heard about intersects with your life. And when it does, it tends to shake life to the core.

Sierra Leone's deeply destructive civil war is a useful case to consider here. Most agree that it officially began in March 1991, when a small group of soldiers called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) crossed into the country from neighboring Liberia. This was no grand invasion: it was a minor incursion in a faraway, finger-like peninsula known as Kailahun District. In the early civil war years, "the RUF was considered by many in the capital to be a marginal phenomenon" (Coulter 2009: 45). Some whom I interviewed in Sierra Leone spoke of how the war began as a kind of rumor or as something small taking place elsewhere. The end was just as inexact. Two peace accords—one announced in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in November 1996, the other in Lomé, Togo, in July 1999—didn't bring much in the way of peace. The first officially lasted a half year, the second was followed by a series of violent incidents. So it was back to the peace accord table for two more agreements, both in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 2000 and yet again in May 2001 (50). "It was not until early 2002 that peace returned to the country," a veteran Sierra Leone expert stated (Peters 2011: 19).

My first field research trip there took place in the edgy aftermath of the first peace accord that didn't stick. I arrived four months into the time of "peace," in March 1997. It certainly didn't feel like a postwar situation. Tension ran thick in the towns and conditions were extremely uncertain in villages. It was, in fact, difficult for a foreigner to get to rural Sierra Leone, where the war mainly had taken place up to that point. Just to get there, I had to hitch

rides with convoys of vehicles that international organizations were using to hand out food rations to village returnees. Conducting field research in some of these villages right before the first treaty's collapse, which happened when military dissidents and the primary rebel group, the RUF, took over the government in May 1997, revealed different ways that suffering was being experienced in rural Sierra Leone.

In interviews with those returning to different villages in eastern and southern Sierra Leone, a pattern of victimization emerged. When the RUF rebels attacked a village, people were shot, burnt, raped, subjected to amputation, captured, or forced to either hide or flee. Some people hid in nearby latrines, fields, or forests. Once the rebels left with their loot and new captives, those who had been hiding tried to aid others who could not run but somehow survived the rebels' rage. This group included polio victims and other physically handicapped people, girls and women crippled by repeated rape, infants, burn victims, and those whose arms or legs had been amputated by rebels.

In most cases, the majority of villagers left home. Scores of children, and sometimes adult women (whom the rebel boys called "Mommy Queens"), were abducted and taken to RUF forest camps. Most of the rest fled. Those with adequate resources or social networks, or good fortune, escaped in the direction of major inland cities like Bo or Kenema. Others eventually made their way to Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city on the coast. But many never made it to any village, town, or city. They fled into the forest. These were the so-called bush people, who developed what is often referred to as a *soqoihun*, the Mende term for "hiding place," each with a carrying capacity of approximately thirty people.¹ These displaced Sierra Leoneans hiding in forests developed new social arrangements in which men and women carried out specific roles to maintain the group's survival. Part of the strategy was to terrify children into silence. As one group of *soqoihun* survivors explained, children had to be warned, "If you talk, the [RUF] will come and kill you. So stay quiet." Those surviving the ordeal—youth, adults, and especially children—were often left profoundly traumatized. I later learned that many in *soqoihuns* inevitably if not regularly crossed paths with RUF soldiers on forest patrol, which could easily lead to more abductions, rapes, and killings, as well as running for their lives.²

Although no one victimized by war or famine can be said to be fortunate, there are degrees of misfortune that often remain as hidden or unrecognized as Sierra Leoneans in *soqoihuns*. War captives or "stayees" (that is, someone

remaining behind) do not escape, usually because they can't but sometimes because they choose not to. Such suggestions of a hierarchy of the unfortunate have been made by others as well. Apfel and Simon observe that the ability of some child victims of violence to conceptualize their suffering "in relation to the suffering of others" allows some to conclude that "I didn't have it so bad. You should talk to so-and-so, who really went through terrible times" (1996: 10). Weiss and Collins note that "although the lot of refugees is hardly attractive, they may be better off than those who stayed behind" (2000: 116).

The shock of war is nonetheless encompassing, upending all lives it leaves in its wake. Much of the damage done is internal. "Wars are lost and won," the veteran Africanist and wartime researcher Carolyn Nordstrom explains, "because people fear death, because they have a horror of dismemberment, because they feel the burdens of oppression so strongly they are willing to risk life and limb. People don't fight or flee war because of the sheer fact of violence. They fight or flee war because of what violence 'feels' like." Nordstrom then explains that feeling: "like existential crisis, like hopelessness, like the loss of the future" (2004: 59).

War, indeed, conjures its own reality for those who live through it, and the existential nature of the wartime experience doesn't seem to translate well to most of those who merely visit, hear, or read about it. Nordstrom's analysis helps us understand the elemental separation between those with war experience and the rest of us:

The researchers who sat at the sides of battlefields taking notes tended to see the end of the battle as the end of their observation. When the immediate carnage ceased, so too did war. But people on the front lines themselves tell a different story. Violence is set in motion with physical carnage, but it doesn't stop there. Violence reconfigures its victims and the social milieu that hosts them. It isn't a passing phenomenon that momentarily challenges a stable system, leaving a scar but no lasting effects. Violence becomes a determining fact in shaping reality as people *will* know it, in the future. (2004: 59–60; emphasis in original)

The intimate experience of wartime violence, Nordstrom suggests, is transformative. It is also separating, since what is authentic on the inside may seem surreal or just plain baffling from the outside. It is this difference that constrains the understanding of observers, however well-intentioned they may be, as to how wartime violence sculpts the lives, perceptions, decisions,

philosophies, and trajectories of those who experience it up close and then must live through it.

To shed some light on this critical contrast, here is a brief description of a second wartime interior, mainly drawn from field research. But before describing it, a brief word on warlords is useful because one such military leader, South Sudan's Kerubino, figures in the story. Warlords constitute a subgroup of military commander. They lord over war, thriving in it and benefiting from it. They have personalized relationships with their armed forces, with whom they may develop some sort of ruling presence in areas they control. Though other commanders also may do this, a warlord's personalization of relations with young male and female fighters can facilitate the growth of the exploitation-recognition dynamic that I describe later in this chapter (and return to in chapter 5). When it comes to military relations and command structures, warlords freelance. Connections to other military outfits and centralized military configurations or state authorities are likely to be loose. As I will suggest shortly, Kerubino was a full-time freelancer. Liberia's Charles Taylor, who first surfaces in the next section, also is considered a warlord, especially when he ruled Taylorland (roughly 1990–1997; this will be discussed in chapter 4).

Akon Payam, in northern Bahr el Ghazal and part of what is now the Republic of South Sudan, was a frontline location across decades of civil war. What took place there has been called, aptly, “scorched-earth army tactics” (Keen 1994: 114). I conducted field research there in 2003, a year before the second civil war ended and two decades after it had begun.³ The character of warfare in that area was marked, in part, by attacks of Murahalin (also spelled Murahaleen or Murahileen) marauders on horseback. These terror militias are widely thought to have been a model for the subsequent Janjaweed militias that wreaked havoc in Darfur, in western Sudan. Winter, for example, notes,

[During civil war in the south,] Arab pro-government “Murahaleen” militias rode their horses into southern villages, killing men, raping women, looting anything they found and burning the huts.

The Darfur conflict broke out just as the war in the south was coming to an end and eyewitness reports bear a striking similarity of atrocities committed by the militias, known in Darfur as the Janjaweed. (2007)

James Aguer has argued that the Murahalin and Janjaweed “are exactly the same groups, just with a different name” (quoted in Winter 2007). In both cases, the assaults were astoundingly ferocious. Addressing Murahalin raids

in the south, Johnson notes that “not only were cattle taken, but Dinka villages were attacked and burned, civilians (including women and children) were killed or abducted and taken back to the North where they were traded or kept in slavery” (2003: 82). An experienced donor official related that since the militias are not paid, they “take slaves as profit.” Jok confirms this assessment. Of the Murahalin he notes that “their booty” from attacks on civilians in northern areas of South Sudan “consists not just of goods, but also of women and children.” He further notes that the Murahalin equate themselves with the “Mujahadeen, holy warriors” (2007: 182).

One of the most telling characteristics of Murahalin raids was that they took place like clockwork. “The time of [Murahalin] Arabs,” a man who never fled the area explained, “came in the winter.” Every year at or near the very same time, from the mid-1980s until 2002, the Murahalin would descend on the villages of Akon Payam. In the early years, an Akon elder recalled, they came “again and again” during dry seasons. Near the end of the war, the attacks were merely annual events. Villagers’ descriptions of what took place next are virtually identical to Johnson’s account. “Villages were being demolished,” another man recalled. “They were set on fire. Cattle were being raided, there were abductions of women and children and the killing of men.” The Murahalin also took “young men to help with cultivation” in the north. One characteristic of the Murahalin sheds light on the character of civil war not only in Bahr el Ghazal but in many other war theaters in Africa: they mainly if not exclusively attacked civilians. As one man from Akon said, “They’d go where the SPLA [the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army, the main southern Sudanese rebel army] wasn’t. They would avoid those areas.” Although the SPLA were known to recruit troops heavily from Akon, they evidently left it unguarded most of the time.

Much more was going on in Akon than just regular militia attacks. There were two famines in Bahr el Ghazal as well. The first was famously devastating. It began the same year the civil war reignited (1983) but reached its peak in 1988, when death rates in the region “were among the highest recorded anywhere in the world” (Keen 1994: 111). The second began as a drought and ended as a famine. In 1998, one survivor recalled how “a lot of people died during the drought.” The drought was in fact tied to military attacks. A Human Rights Watch report summed up the causes in the following way:

Systematic human rights abuses were the direct cause of the famine in Bahr El Ghazal [in 1998]. The famine agents are the government of Sudan, including the *murabeelen* or militia of the Baggara (Arab cattle nomads),

and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The [ethnic] Dinka warlord Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, who has twice changed sides in one year, provoked famine mostly as the leader of a government militia. The Bahr El Ghazal famine affected—and continues to assail [as of 1999]—approximately one million people, a majority of them Dinka, the largest ethnic group in Sudan. (1999)

Akon was one of the places where the forces of Karubino, the notorious South Sudanese turncoat mentioned above, waged war, essentially, on his own people. A renowned fighter who was one of the SPLA's founders in 1983, he alternately fought for and against the SPLA during the civil war. For approximately four years (either 1994–1997 or 1995–1998; the dates are debated), what some people in Akon called “the Karubino Crisis” took place. Karubino would enter the area “at night to abduct cows and boys and then train the boys as fighters,” a government official in the area stated. “He had thousands of youth.” He then attacked the area four times, the official recalled. In one village, a group of youth and elders showed me the remnants of Karubino's foxholes, where, they said, his troops fired at villagers as they returned from hiding from the Murahalin one dry season.

One might imagine, given this trilogy of horrors—the Murahalin, the famines, and Karubino's forces—that people would flee Akon. To be sure, some did. But safe destinations seemed hard to determine. Fleeing to nearby towns, for example, could be perilous. One man recalled, for example, that “if you went to the [northern Sudanese-controlled] town, you would be arrested as a spy. If [northern Sudanese authorities] found four to five people together, they would suspect you as part of the resistance. They would kill you and dump your body.” And so a sizable proportion of Akon residents evidently remained in the area. Not that they stayed in one place. That was impossible. They moved about but did not go far. “Most people in Akon stayed here,” one Akon resident recalled. “But they were running from place to place.” As a result, “People had no time to cultivate. The little they had got finished [while] running here and there.” An astonishing and illuminating aspect of this experience is how devoted people were to educating their children. As one parent recalled, “People tried to teach in areas where they ran to, but the teaching was not effective. As soon as they started teaching, they had to run again.” Staying out of school buildings was important, since there were reports of some children being abducted from classrooms. There was also the threat of the northern Sudanese bombing schools. And yet, despite all of this

and more, it could have been much worse. One aspect of the experience of war in Akon that was difficult to grasp was that some people in other parts of northern Bahr el Ghazal fled *to* Akon. For them, Akon must have been considered comparatively safe. One elder stated that, as of 2003, “Akon has gathered so many [displaced] people from so many areas, and now they have not gone back.”

During my many years of interviewing people who have lived through war, rarely has anyone referred to the awfulness and horror of his or her wartime experiences. In Akon, for example, only one person mentioned it. He did so in a monotone voice, summing up all that had taken place there with the phrase “We have really suffered.” A characteristic Sierra Leonean description of extreme wartime hardship is just as clipped: “It is not easy.”

It is not easy. The phrase is a revealing way of understating extreme and extended loss and distress. Shaw tells us that a disinclination to talk about Sierra Leone’s civil war in the open is a locally created practice of “social forgetting,” which she defines as “a refusal to reproduce the violence by talking about it publicly” (2005: 9). Even in private, speaking of hardship is difficult to do, and doing so with a foreign researcher may seem particularly inappropriate. And yet I have found that many people are genuinely interested in talking about what happened to them during confidential interviews. However, few have offered to describe, in any way, the emotions that may well have accompanied what they experienced. In short, techniques for processing or shielding horrific wartime experiences, such as social forgetting and understatement, are vital, viable, and no doubt necessary methods for recovery. But they also open the door to having hardships underestimated or overlooked by outsiders. There is thus a strong need to appreciate subtlety, suggestion, self-protection, and context in personal depictions of war-induced hardship. As Shaw urges, “We should develop sensitivities to grassroots practices and build on these if we are to have meaningful post-conflict reconstruction” (12).

THE IMPRINT OF COMBAT

How do you start a brief consideration of the vast array of African youth experiences of war? Let’s begin with beer. In the strange world of soldiering for Liberia’s former kingpin Charles Taylor, his infamous “Pay Yourself” policy played an instrumental role. Utas quotes a female youth in a Taylor contingent who put it simply: “If you didn’t loot you didn’t eat” (2005a: 67). So loot they did, male youth combatants mostly, but to the benefit of their

female youth companions too. The male youth “were in general not used to having money,” Utas states. But through looting, “they felt so affluent that they could wash their cars in beer—a beverage most could not even afford to drink prior to the war—and that they could drive a car until it ran out of gasoline and then just dump it for another one. Likewise, the young girlfriends got hold of commodities that they had only dreamt of before” (66). Throughout Utas’s dense and complex picture of Liberian youth who were directly involved in the nation’s civil war, there is a strong sense that being an outsider lay at the core of youth identities. As he states, “The civil war was seen as a revolution in the eyes of many young people—a chance to become someone in a national system that had marginalized them, but also a chance to get rid of the load of work and expectations that the parental generation had laid on them” (65). Utas emphasizes this mix of prewar entrapment in culturally prescribed obligations and activities and dim economic and educational prospects. From such a perspective, a war can look like a life opportunity. “To most youth combatants, youth identity—of being excluded from society—appears to have been the core ‘touchstone of fraternity,’ and a common ground for fomenting a ‘moral community’ irrespective of ethnic background” (2008: 114).

Utas makes clear that, tragically, the sense of community, together with the immediate gratification and empowerment that soldiering offered, didn’t last. As soon as the war ended, young men returned to the margins: “Enlistment in the armies, in the first place, was envisaged as a move away from the margin and into the centre of society—a means of integrating in society, even if by force. . . . But for a large proportion of Liberian ex-combatants re-marginalization, not reintegration, remains the only reality. Extreme poverty and lack of opportunities maintain the continuum of war and peace in Liberia” (2005b: 151). The sense that youth become combatants, in part, to move up in society, or at least not remain as outsiders, applies to contexts beyond Liberia’s borders. Take, for example, the case of John (not his real name), an experienced former combatant in eastern DRC. A youth of twenty-five when I interviewed him in 2005, he was married and had children. Two weeks previously, while the war raged around him, he had decided to enter a DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) program and try out civilian life. He had already begun to look back longingly on his recent career as a soldier. “When I had a gun,” he recalled, “life was more interesting. I could have anything I wanted—money, food and girls—any time I wanted. I could sleep with any woman I wanted, even for free.” The suggestion of



Two male youth soldiers pose for a photo in wartime Sierra Leone in 1998. Both are members of one of the many traditional hunting societies that transformed into armed militias during their nation's civil war. One holds a near-ubiquitous element of many contemporary wars: the AK-47, a Kalashnikov automatic rifle. Children and youth often learn to take apart, clean, and reassemble AKs as part (and sometimes all) of their military training.

sexual violence is frank here. But so is his yearning for days when he enjoyed access to, in his view, abundance and power. He was impatient with civilian life, and he disliked his postwar existence. The ex-combatants, he said, “have no work and no farmland, so what are we going to do? I returned from the bush [where he served as a fighter] two weeks ago. I sold my shoes and two pairs of trousers [which he had received in the DDR program]. Now, what am I going to do? The consequence of [civilian] people being afraid of us is that we don’t get jobs.” Near the end of our interview, he summed up his situation as follows: “With no work, life is only difficult. It’s really no life at all.” His friend, another similarly frustrated and impatient former combatant, predicted the likely future for both of them. “Without jobs,” he said, “at some point we’re going to return to the forest [to become a soldier again]. We have no choice.”

The fieldwork of Bøås reflects similar findings. He notes, to begin with,

that youth may sense a real opportunity for social acceptance and advancement by becoming a soldier: “In societies torn by conflict, [military] entities can serve as providers of some sort of order and social organization and can represent [a] means of social integration and upward social mobility. The only way to understand youth involvement in such processes is to take their own experiences seriously.” (2007: 40) After conflict, reflecting on the fate of ex-combatant and other male youth in northern Uganda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, Bøås suggests a postwar reality reminiscent of Utas’s descriptions of Liberia. In slum areas in all three contexts, Bøås remarks, “you find them: idle young men, seeing little of any opportunity to make the transformation from their present state of despair and exclusion into something else and better.” Then he predicts a return to law breaking and unrest: “all it takes,” he states, “is one individual with an idea about something else and the means to transform his ideas into action—call it resistance, call it revolt, call it violence, robbery—and they are game, eager to settle the score of humiliation and marginalization” (52).

Bøås’s prediction must be put into context. While their involvement in crime is harder to determine, it is clear that many if not most ex-combatant youth do not revolt or violently resist later. Relatively few postwar revolts have taken place in Africa. One exception is Liberia’s capital, Monrovia, which has experienced “sporadic episodes of violence” involving ex-combatants many times, including in 2004, 2006, and 2007 (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008). But a similar succession of urban youth unrest has not occurred in the two other places Bøås mentions (Sierra Leone and northern Uganda). And elsewhere too: a mystery noted in chapter 1 is why more excluded, war-affected youth are not violent—even those bearing the profile Bøås depicts above. The return to postwar violence just doesn’t happen very often. This fact helps open the door to positive engagement with young people, who are too often viewed as dangerous and bad—even while nearly all of them are remarkably peaceful. What we are afraid of is infrequently present in ordinary youth lives. Advancement (or efforts to advance) without violence is the norm.

A second contextual concern arising from the work of Utas and Bøås is how ex-combatant youth compare to their noncombatant counterparts. Boothby led a longitudinal study to examine this issue. Boothby’s research into the lives of thirty-nine former child soldiers (all male) in Mozambique’s civil war extended across sixteen years (1988–2004). He found that, “despite disruptions to their life trajectories, this group of former child soldiers is far-

ing as well as, and often better than, national averages” in terms of household income, housing and food security, children’s health status, and educational status (2006: 174). Comparing male and female children and youth who had been abducted during the civil war in northern Uganda, Annan, Blattman, and Horton found that, “by most measures of psychological well-being and social support, we see only mild differences on average between the abducted and never-abducted” (2006: 67). Subsequent research with former women and girl combatants in northern Uganda, moreover, found that “social acceptance [of them] is high, many women and girls are psychologically resilient, and there is little evidence of aggression and violence” (Annan et al. 2011: 879).

Although the Boothby study and the two by Annan and colleagues point to a remarkable degree of resiliency among former child and youth soldiers, the authors also found that the time young people spent in war had damaging results. Boothby found that “one of the most devastating legacies of child soldiering was the years of lost economic opportunity that, in turn, made difficult the key life cycle tasks of choosing a wife and building a family” (2006: 175). Annan, Blattman, and Horton found “substantial adverse impacts of abduction on youth’s education and economic activity, even when including very short-term abductees” (2006: 67). Other studies uncovered much more debilitating outcomes. Wessells found that tiny proportions of former girl soldiers in Angola, Liberia, and Sierra Leone were able to participate in DDR programming (2006: 164, 168, 166). Uvin’s research in Burundi found that male child soldiers, in addition to what he called “the self-demobilized” (that is, ex-combatants who never entered a DDR program, all of whom were male), felt “a sense of injustice, of grievance, of suffering for nothing, of disrespect” (2007: 23). Tonheim’s study of “girls formerly associated with armed forces and groups” in eastern DRC highlighted a level of social stigmatization so severe that “some of the girls see returning to [their former armed group] as an alternative to staying at home and [enduring] discrimination and insults” (2012: 287, 289). Denov’s review of girl ex-combatants in Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and northern Uganda underscored how they faced “profound invisibility and seemingly unrelenting victimisation . . . during and following armed conflict” (2008: 831). Indeed, it is a crushing fact that girls are the most versatile of child soldiers—in addition to functions they share with boy soldiers, like fighting, spying behind enemy lines, portering, and domestic work, girls are much more likely to become concubines, victims of sexual violence, and sex slaves—yet they often have far fewer social and economic options than their male counterparts afterward.

In the end, the inability to escape life on the edge of society is a theme that radiates powerfully in most accounts of the lives of both male and female youth across African war and postwar settings. It is tragic and alarming, and it rests at the core of the challenge that this book aims to address.

FOUR ILLUMINATING CASES

The following four cases of African youth experiences of conflict collectively shed light on underexamined issues that shape youth views and lives. They are all drawn from my field interview notes.⁴

The first two cases involve two friends. They are both former child soldiers in Liberia's civil war. Their stories reveal two crucial, and paradoxical, wartime themes. The first concerns how easy it can be, given the seemingly endless numbers of available young people in African theaters of war, for military commanders to exploit youth. Child soldiers can be exceptionally brave and accept high degrees of risk. They can also be replaced, should they be badly wounded or killed, by newcomers who join or are abducted into fighting forces. The second concerns how, at the same time, military commanders frequently perceive a level of capability in youngsters that elders and other influential adults in peacetime contexts simply do not see or appreciate. It is a crucially important dividing line between civilian and military life for young people: youngsters in fighting forces are often quick to demonstrate their bravery as fighters and their ability to assume high levels of authority and responsibility. Some even become, officially or unofficially, military officers. The following two cases illuminate how adults in military outfits simultaneously exploit young people while recognizing a degree of potential and capability that no one else seems to see.

Matthew was sixteen when I interviewed him in 2005. His military career began as "a small-small soldier behind Commander sBU [Small Boys' Unit]" in two military outfits during earlier stages of Liberia's long and winding civil war, which began in 1989, receded in 1996–1997, reignited in 2000, and finally ended in 2003. Matthew's return to military life began in an almost casual fashion. After leaving Monrovia with his mother in 2003, he attended a Muslim madrasa in a small Liberian town. Feeling he wasn't getting "fair treatment" from his madrasa teacher, Matthew turned to a new friend in town who proposed the following to him: "I'll take you somewhere where I'll be responsible for you, I'll feed you and will take care of you." Liberia at that time was devastated by civil war, and the chance for safety attracted thirteen-year-old Matthew. And food: it is not surprising that the promise

of regular access to food was part of the appeal. It is a recurrent theme in child soldier stories.

Matthew said that he didn't know that his friend was taking him to join what was then the main Liberian rebel group, the LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy).⁵ At any rate, Matthew said that he entered two months of military training after his friend had taken him out of their country and across the border, into the Forest Region (Région Forestière) of neighboring Guinea. Then, Matthew related, "they armed me and told me to attack Foya," a remote Liberian town near the borders of Guinea and Sierra Leone. He described his three assaults on Foya as part of a contingent of 250 child soldiers: "We attacked on a Saturday in 2003. There were 250 men in the first attack. Two hundred died, 25 were wounded, and 25 didn't get hit [including Matthew]. The second attack failed too: 250 went and 200 died [none, he added later, were wounded]. On the third attack, we succeeded. My commander said it's always 250 [soldiers] who attack. If you lose 200, retreat. Otherwise, keep attacking." Matthew never seems to have questioned this sort of battlefield math, which accepted extremely high casualty rates as a matter of course. Most soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone received descriptive nicknames that highlighted a notable quality of each soldier, such as "Quick to Fire" or "Walking Creeping." Matthew's nickname (not shared here to help shield his identity) hailed his remarkable ability to almost miraculously avoid being shot while comrades fell all around him. But the idea that child soldier lives were cheap resonates: it appears commonplace for commanders in Africa and elsewhere to employ a similar calculus about their youngest troops.

Matthew finally did fall in battle. It was from shrapnel, probably from a mortar that landed near him. As he noted, "I received particles in both legs" after the LURD fighters had moved through Foya. After one short week for recovery, Matthew worked in logistics. Then his second military career began as a "Reki," which is, essentially, spying on the opposition behind enemy lines. Matthew enjoyed his new specialization: "I wasn't scared of doing this [work]: I volunteered. I left my arms [gun] behind. I just go [across enemy lines]. When I would see [enemy] soldiers talking, I would just sit and listen. I would hear the news and carry it back. Nobody can question you."

Matthew's assessment of his military career is striking. On balance and within the world where he lived, it seems rational and reasonable: "I never thought of escaping and I was never captured. I liked to fight. I loved the war because there was nowhere else to go. I was just a part of it." Given that



While driving to a village in the interior of Liberia in 2005, my research team passed an abandoned house near the road that was covered with drawings. A man who lived across the road explained that child soldiers had lived in the house for a time during the civil war. During that period, the children took charcoal and drew on the walls, leaving a record of their inner thoughts and ideas. In some areas, they practiced counting and wrote simple nouns, like "dog" and "cat." In others, as depicted in this photo, they drew pictures of war. A large, powerful man—perhaps their commander—is boldly drawn in the upper-right corner. Above one of his biceps is the image of a sad child. Lying flat across the center of the disjointed scene is a dead person with arms flung outward. Images of other people, some ghostlike, are on the wall as well. The children were evidently known as the Marine Bush Commandos, which is written in the upper-left corner.

warfare was all around him, joining the fight made sense. Former combatants from different countries, in fact, have intimated that becoming a soldier was a protection strategy: you were safer and in control if you were a member of a force. And clearly, Matthew was an expert in the trade. He ended up returning to soldiering during the LURD's final attack on Monrovia, when the war ended. After that, Matthew explained, "I was disarmed." He said that he received some money in return, all of which had long since been spent, and an assortment of basic supplies. After gaining the chance to attend a school, he said, his support disintegrated. Matthew was interested in joining a new youth training program for one reason: he needed the certificate that he hoped to receive upon graduation from the program. Neighbors and policemen

harassed Matthew and other ex-combatants in his Monrovia neighborhood whenever crimes took place in the locality. He hoped that having a program certificate with his name on it would change his identity from a “disgruntled” former fighter to a youth seeking a peaceful future for himself.

The second child soldier story from Liberia comes from Washington, Matthew’s friend. Washington had been fighting for President Charles Taylor’s government side when Matthew and his LURD contingent attacked Foya in 2003. His military career began when he was twelve and continued for five years (2000–2004). On his way to school one day, he recalled, “I was captured, blindfolded, put on a chopper [helicopter] and taken to a training camp.” Training lasted two weeks, during which time he met some of his school friends. “They were all there,” he said, including those who had been abducted before him. They gave him some vital advice: “If you want to survive [as a soldier], you have to be brave.”

The new abductee was so fearless that he caught his general’s notice, who told him one day, “You come with me.” Washington became the general’s houseboy, though it was clear that his houseboy duties included soldiering; he continued fighting in battles as well. Wounded in one encounter by “particles of a bomb,” Washington ended up in a hospital in Monrovia. After another child soldier with shrapnel wounds had both of his legs amputated there, Washington ran to his sister’s house in Monrovia. He didn’t stay there long. After recovering from his wounds, he was abducted a second time by Taylor’s soldiers (a notoriously tough regiment called “the Marines”) on a football pitch in town. Moved up to the front lines, he lasted a week before escaping and returning to his sister’s home in Monrovia once again. This time, Taylor’s soldiers punished Washington by beating his brother and grandmother. After asking himself, “What’s the use?” Washington avoided a contingent of Marines by diving out of a back window of his sister’s home—and then heading straight to Taylor’s military base in Foya on his own. It was the place where he had first been taken.

It is here, when Washington was fifteen years old, that his military career took off. Wearing plaited hair and his “Marvin Gaye hat,” Washington related that his commander left and put him in charge—of the entire military base, on the war’s front line. It was 2003 and the LURD was driving toward Monrovia. Washington was ordered to retreat to the capital city in an operation that had two names: “Dust to Dust” and “Man Moving, Man Dropping.” The latter served as a reminder for what should be done to stragglers. “While we’re moving,” Washington matter-of-factly explained, “if someone says, ‘I’m tired, I can’t make it,’ you kill them.” With LURD forces at their backs, “Com-

mander" Washington led, in the version of events that he related, thirty-six hundred troops and civilians to Monrovia. It took seventeen harrowing days to get there. The journey included getting lost in a forest and traversing a treacherous river. Shortly after reaching Monrovia, Washington was ordered right back to the front. At the time of our 2005 interview, Washington was a student, having first gone through the soldier demobilization program. He was clearly troubled and likely traumatized. "I'm an aggressive type," he told me, "and I like to fight." In fact, Matthew and Washington both related that they fought each other violently and often before making up afterward.

What does one make of these stories? They may be reasonably accurate, they may contain exaggerations. They most certainly contain a wealth of precise detail, and the veteran Liberian translators who were with me during the interviews later related that the historical particulars in the accounts closely aligned with actual military events. What matter for the purposes of this discussion are two qualities that child soldiering brings to the surface: daring and (ironically) the opportunity to discover and apply new talents. It is thus important to note where the two teenagers ended up: with neither their bravery nor the skills they realized and honed in the military being recognized afterward. It is, most unfortunately, a too-often-overlooked theme of war and postwar worlds. Military life for children features, among other things, exploitation, periods of profound terror, subjugation, and complete obedience to commanders at all times (see, for example, Wessells 2006). Yet it also provides some youngsters with opportunities to show themselves in ways that they otherwise never would have had the chance to demonstrate. The palpable frustration that emanates from most of the many interviews I have conducted with former soldiers in Africa collectively expresses a crucial concern: that in peacetime such young people too often lack opportunities to demonstrate the often-impressive talents that they had developed as soldiers. Young former soldiers in African wars may not look like much: ragtag, skinny, and poorly educated, quite often, and wholly unexceptional on the surface. But such impressions can be deeply misleading. The notable skills that child soldiering can force to the fore cannot be tapped until someone besides warlords and many other military commanders looks for them. Accessing the tested talents of these youthful outliers must be made a component of postwar reconstruction.

The next two cases both concern female youth and address, respectively, some of the many experiences of internally displaced persons and refugees. The first

concerns a Sierra Leonean who was variously abducted, captured, or taken in several times. It is the sort of story that is usually overlooked and unreported: the displaced who neither get to an IDP camp nor gain formal humanitarian or development support. In other words, they are entirely on their own.

Mariamou shared her story with me in 1997, when she was seventeen. Four years earlier, on a Thursday in 1993, her class six primary school teacher released them from school because “something bad was happening.” And so it was: while Mariamou and her younger sister were fleeing to the house of relatives in a nearby village, a rebel soldier caught them and locked them inside a house. A helicopter flew overhead and dropped a bomb. Battle zones can be confusing as well as frightening, and this one was clearly both. Eventually, the sisters were caught in crossfire between two military groups, both of which Mariamou called “rebels.” On one side, she said, were the “Foday Sankoh rebels,” the name of the leader of the RUF, who had ignited the civil war in 1991. On the other side were the “ECOMOG rebels,” that is, the multilateral West African force that was present in Sierra Leone at that time.⁶ “We were trapped by the RUF rebels and attacked by the ECOMOG rebels,” she recalled. At some point, she stated, “the ECOMOG rebels took us to Liberia” by helicopter, just across the border from Sierra Leone. Soon after they landed, another battle ensued, this time between ECOMOG fighters and what she described as “ULIMO and Sierra Leonean soldiers” (ULIMO, or the United Liberation Movement for Democracy, was one of the military groups fighting in Liberia’s concurrent and comingled civil war). It is not at all clear whom the Sierra Leonean soldiers might have been. At any rate, the two girls eventually escaped during a roadside firefight and fled back into Sierra Leone.

Mariamou evidently then gained a bird’s-eye view on the workings of the RUF command center. She said that while she and her sister were “running through the bush” on the Sierra Leonean side of its eastern border with Liberia, they were “met by Foday Sankoh and Mrs. Agnes Deen-Jalloh, who lived with him.” Mariamou became Mrs. Deen-Jalloh’s maid, and her little sister remained with her. Mariamou said that she and her sister “were always locked inside” a house that contained stores of food, undoubtedly to prevent the two girls from running away. She described moving with the rebels to another base camp, seeing rebel forces “burn houses with people inside,” and helping to porter supplies and war booty.

Eventually Mariamou pushed back against her boss. Once, after Mariamou refused to clean Mrs. Deen-Jalloh’s shoes, Mrs. Deen-Jalloh shot her in the leg. In other instances, she stated, Mrs. Deen-Jalloh would “beat me for no

reason.” Then “another wicked woman” named Fatamata killed Mariamu’s sister and cut off her head. She then gave it to Mariamu and told her to bury it. Meanwhile, Mariamu said, some of the RUF “cooked” her sister’s body “and ate it.” They also drank her sister’s blood. Eventually, during a battle involving RUF and government soldiers, Mariamu escaped. Captured by government soldiers and treated like a rebel captive, she led them to an RUF hideaway and was then released. After a long time in the hospital (she had become ill near the end of her captivity with the RUF), Mariamu ended up begging in Bo, eastern Sierra Leone’s main city. A Lebanese woman took her in but later told the police that Mariamu was a rebel. Mariamu ended up with a policeman and his family. “The man is maltreating me,” she told me near the end of our interview. “I haven’t gotten any food to eat today.”

Mariamu’s firsthand story of extreme brutality and survival is complex and may not be entirely accurate. But there is also much to learn from it. Like other captured children, Mariamu was viewed as both valuable and expendable. She alone survived the horrific abuse that she and her sister endured as captives of the RUF. Government soldiers apparently took no particular interest in her after she provided them with useful information. While such retellings cannot be verified, Mariamu’s return to civilian life is frighteningly familiar. Young, female, desperate, and unprotected, she was twice used for domestic labor and perhaps more: reference to the policeman who was “maltreating” her may point to sexual abuse. As was the case for so many other adolescent girls and female youth, war and severe vulnerability turned Mariamu, essentially, into a useful and entirely available human commodity.

The fourth and final case examines a collective approach to the threat of rape. It draws from a meeting that I had with the Anti-Rape Committee in Kenya’s Dagahaley Refugee Camp, one of a cluster of camps collectively known as Dadaab. The members were all Somali refugee women and female youth. Located near the Somali border, the camp has become infamous for rape. The meeting took place in 2000 but it could have taken place yesterday: not much in terms of the protection of refugee women appears to have changed since that time.⁷

The situation basically boils down to the following. The women and female youth who met with me explained that rape in Somalia “was rare.” “Even during the war,” a woman explained, “there was no rape [because] a rapist would be killed” if he were caught. This assessment flies in the face of reports of a very high prevalence of rape during Somalia’s early civil war years. This is

exemplified by Human Rights Internet, which cites various sources to depict “the number of rapes by soldiers and bandits in Somalia” during 1991–1993 as massive and the practice as systematic and commonplace (1994: 109). As in Kenya’s Dadaab camps, the persistence of high rates of sexual violence against girls and women inside Somalia appears to extend across years if not decades. A 2014 publication, for example, asserts that “sexual violence is pervasive in much of Somalia” (Muscati and Hassan 2014: 1). Regardless of actual wartime realities, the women and female youth with whom I spoke cited virtual impunity for rapists of Somali refugees in Kenya. Some of the raping appears to have been spurred by intergroup rivalries. One refugee woman vividly explained how Somali men used rape as a means to punish other groups:

There are [three] kinds of Somali refugees: [those from the] Harwiye and Darod clans, minorities (Afars, Issas, Madibau, Tumal, Midgan, Boon, and so on), and Somali Bantu. The Harwiye and Darod are dominant. The Somali Bantu can’t marry [members of] the other three groups, so they rape women from those three groups. The minority groups can’t marry [Harwiye and Darod], so they rape their women. I [also] suspect that Somali clan members are raping the unmarried [virgin women] of other clans to prevent them from marrying. In the refugee camps, [Somali men] rape. This is their chance for revenge.⁸

A second reported source of rape came from unmarried refugee men. Living in a refugee camp can make the attainment of socially recognized marriage and adulthood much more difficult. In refugee camps, access to land, livestock, and other possible manhood prerequisites may be entirely unavailable to male refugee youth. With approved marriage and manhood out of the question, some male youth pursue other activities. During a meeting with a youth group in a Dadaab refugee camp, one male youth said that, in addition to male youth involvement in “banditry,” there is “raping.” He noted that “a refugee [male youth] can rape refugee girls. If I don’t have a wife, I have to rape.”

The alarming logic that validates rape as a form of intergroup revenge and an expression of frustrated masculinity only describes the raping of women and female youth within refugee camps. A second “arena of rape” took place outside the refugee camp confines. This rape was allegedly undertaken by “bandits” who were not refugees but Kenyans of Somali origin (though that was hard to determine). This involved groups of Somali women who left

the camps to search for firewood. During interviews with Somali refugee men, they made it clear that they cannot accompany women outside the camps because the bandits would kill them if they did. The members of the Anti-Rape Committee concurred. "If our men go with us," one member explained, "they will be killed." She added that, in any case, some refugee women are single and "don't have men to protect them." At the same time, refugee men and women asserted that having men helping women fetch firewood was a cultural impossibility. As an Anti-Rape Committee member said, "Even if Somali men won't be killed in the bush [protecting us], it won't work because it's not part of our culture."

To be sure, the refugee camps, with their tens of thousands of residents, were placed in an environmentally fragile and lawless semidesert near Kenya's Somali frontier, which is among the Kenyan border areas that "have always been insecure and weakly governed, characterized by banditry, cattle rustling and insurgency, as well as violent clashes between the Kenyan army and armed local groups" (Crisp 2000: 64). With all of this in mind, a strong response by some local residents against encroachment, together with violence and opportunism, is hardly surprising. But that alone can explain neither the reportedly regular raping of women and female youth who venture away from camps for firewood nor the many rapes carried out within refugee society. What is clear, however, is that sexual violation of girls, female youth, and women in Dadaab has reached disturbing and terrifying levels. It is a chilling thought, given that the actual incidence of rape and other forms of gender-based violence may be much higher than what is reported. As Horst notes, "Incidents [of rape and other forms of gender-based violence in and around the Dadaab camps] are very often not reported because of stigmatisation and shame, and because women do not feel safe enough to report them" (2006: 88). The cauldron of torment that this has undoubtedly created and the disturbing regularity with which rape has been carried out highlight how female bodies can become a central location where warfare, as well as the enmities and frustrations that conflicts generate, plays out.

Part Two: Basic Biologies

FOOD AND DEVELOPING BRAINS

Rape is only one way in which war leaves destructive imprints on the bodies of youth. To be sure, sexual violence is so central to the discussion of youth and war in Africa that its broad use and impact are discussed in depth in

the next chapter. Extensive acts of sexual violence in conflict environments have helped fuel a tendency, in the worlds of academia and practice, to focus much attention on war trauma, or on resilience to or recovery from it. Notwithstanding the broad significance of psychological trauma, narrowly focusing on it runs the risk of blanketing awareness of overlapping concerns. With this in mind, I will examine briefly two important biological imprints that directly relate to extreme hardship, including hardship caused by war, and its consequences.

The first concerns food. Securing sustenance, much less sustenance of a nutritious kind, is a near-constant survival feature in theaters of war and far beyond. Child soldier stories, to name only one example, regularly feature searches for food. Finding enough to eat was a central component of accounts of living in Sierra Leonean *soqoihuns* and in Akon in South Sudan during civil wars. Indeed, regularly eating nutritious food is a broad concern in developing countries in peacetime as well as during conflict. El-Ghannam, for example, finds that “increased child malnutrition and mortality rates are more likely to occur among regions that have a higher illiteracy rate, [a higher] unemployment rate, more poverty, [a higher] fertility rate, bigger family size, a higher percent of food consumption of GDP, a higher maternal mortality rate, and a higher population per physician” (2003: 16). While “there is a lot of evidence for the general view that childhood malnutrition directly affects the ability of adults to function successfully in the world” (Banerjee and Duflo 2011: 31), the sub-Saharan African region routinely attracts special concern.⁹ Among the region’s indicators of serious child malnutrition is its association “with approximately 60 percent of under-five mortality” (Kandala et al. 2011: 1). Abubakar cites estimates that over 60 million African children are stunted (“an indicator of chronic malnutrition”), 93.2 million preschool children in Africa are anemic, and nearly 50 million African children aged six to twelve years are iodine deficient (2013: 181, 182). War-torn countries are particularly hard hit. For instance, in the DRC, “children’s chronic malnutrition is highly prevalent in the entire country with rates largely above 40 percent” (Abubakar 2013: 11). As for the Great Lakes region generally (that is, Rwanda and Burundi as well as the DRC), Nubé and Sonneveld find that “the conflicts which ravaged the region in the past decades have undoubtedly contributed to its poor nutritional conditions” (2005: 768).

How can malnutrition impair young people? In myriad ways. Malnutrition in the early stages of life (beginning prior to birth) can lead to higher mortality rates, “increased incidence of infectious diseases,” and direct impacts on the brain. These include “delayed psychomotor development, academic

underachievement, and lower productive capacity in adult life” (de Souza, Fernandes, and Tavares do Carmo 2011: 132), as well as “low intelligence for [a person’s] age” (Chopra et al. 1986, cited in Montanha-Rohas et al. 2005: 49). Malnutrition can leave permanent physical damage—even when early states of malnutrition are reversed and children eventually and regularly receive nutritious food: “Since several brain regions develop during the perinatal period, the full genetic brain potential may never be achieved due to early malnutrition, despite the great adaptability of the brain and later reversal of nutrient deficiencies. The degree of recovery following malnutrition may depend on the duration, quality, and intensity of deprivation” (de Souza, Fernandes, and Tavares do Carmo 2011: 140). Intense deprivation can lead pregnant women and young children to eat dirt (known as geophagia, or pica). It is a sign of anemia, which affects “an estimated four out of ten pre-school children in developing countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Anemia and other ailments common to malnutrition are the underlying cause of about one-third of all children’s deaths, says the WHO” (Loewenberg 2011: 1161).

Unfortunately, deprivation can be long and intense during and after wars. Accordingly, while there are ways to reduce the impact of malnutrition (such as vitamin and mineral supplements to address childhood anemia; Loewenberg 2011), those who grow up during conflict periods may suffer from severe and prolonged deprivation. The case of children in Angola is illuminating in this regard. Research conducted by Agadjaniana and Prata found that children who lived in areas “where fighting had been particularly ferocious and generalized, and the devastation most profound, exhibited significantly lower levels of age-adequate immunization and higher levels of malnutrition” than children in areas “less affected” by civil war. The researchers also found that areas occupied by the ethnic Ovimbundu had “by far the worst nutritional situation and immunization coverage” in the country. This was not due to ethnic discrimination, they state. Instead, Agadjaniana and Prata assert that most Ovimbundu resided in areas that the UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola; National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) rebels either controlled or claimed as their territory. As a result, Ovimbundu people “had a disproportionately limited access to food supply and elementary public health services, regardless of the intensity of the fighting” (2003: 2525). This is an indication of how levels of deprivation can run higher in rebel-held areas, where access to food and health services may be weak and perhaps nonexistent.

Cultivating an awareness of the many ways that malnutrition can undercut youth can improve the power to diagnose and address problems that youth face with more precision. For example, what may look like symptoms of psychological trauma may be related, at least in part, to malnutrition. A recent study found that “depressive symptoms are elevated in 11–17-year-old youth with histories of malnutrition in the first year of life” (Galler et al. 2010: 796). Another found that “previously malnourished children” were thought to be “significantly more anxious, sad, depressed and withdrawn” (Appoh 2004: 92).¹⁰ Growing up in areas with significant, long-standing, and widespread child malnutrition may impair youth in ways that are misdiagnosed (as with misattributions of the cause of depression) or overlooked (as with learning limitations).

Since iodine “is the only micronutrient known to have significant, irreversible effects on brain development” (Field, Robles, and Torero 2009: 140), iodine deficiency constitutes a particularly pernicious threat to the capacity

In a community of impoverished social pariahs (the ethnic Twa, also known as the Batwa) in postwar Burundi in 2006, children who appear to be seriously malnourished stand before two mothers. The negative impact of such deprivation can last into adulthood.



of young people to learn. It is remarkably widespread—over 1.9 billion people are affected by iodine deficiency (Melse-Boonstra and Jaiswal 2010: 29). Field, Robles, and Torero drive home the danger it can cause with the following statement: “An estimated 1 billion people are at risk of brain damage from IDD [iodine deficiency disorders] worldwide” (2009: 140). They also note that “iodine is thought to matter most at the time of fetal brain development,” since “fetal IDD permanently limits intellectual functioning.” The authors further observe that girls are more susceptible to fetal IDD than boys, thus creating “sex differences in rates of learning disability” (141). They consider this “a particularly compelling explanation for gender differences in schooling in Tanzania, where lower female attainment is almost entirely accounted for by the extremely low rate at which girls pass the national secondary school qualifying exam” (141–142). Their conclusion is startling: “Endemic iodine deficiency may give rise to gender differences in cognitive ability.” It also raises the possible result that “physiological gender differences exert a significant influence on schooling.” They contend that this “has important implications for how we interpret gender differences in schooling attainment across the globe and over time” (166). Although Melse-Boonstra and Jaiswal hopefully note that “iodine supplementation in school-aged children can reverse certain delays in cognitive performance,” the work of the two sets of researchers collectively suggests that “since brain’s development begins at conception and rapidly progresses into the first few years of life, the impact of iodine supplementation in early life may be more beneficial” (2010: 33). Field, Robles, and Torero go still further: “In much of Africa, universal salt iodization could go far toward achieving gender parity in schooling attainment” (2009: 166).

This discussion of iodine deficiency, anemia, and malnutrition underscores how support for youth properly begins before they are born. Later in their lives, a second biological imprint on young bodies gains significance: the decisive brain development processes that take place when people are in their teens and twenties. To begin with, during adolescence “the brain is in a dynamic biologic state” that “exits this period in a different state from which it enters” (Weinberger, Ellevåg, and Giedd 2005: 2). One of the last areas of the brain to mature is the prefrontal cortex (PFC), which is often considered the brain’s “CEO” (chief executive officer) because it “is responsible for such skills as setting priorities, organizing plans and ideas, forming strategies, controlling impulses, and allocating attention” (1). The development process of the PFC is remarkably long, as the adult pattern of the PFC is not reached until “*the end of the twenties*” (2; my emphasis). In other words, a person’s

ability to prioritize, plan, strategize, control him- or herself, and focus attention does not mature until about age thirty.

During this lengthy period of maturation, vital processes are taking place in fundamentally different ways. One of these concerns how emotions are interpreted. One study found that, when people identified emotions on other people's faces, "teens more often activated their amygdala—the brain area that experiences fear, threat and danger—whereas adults more often activated their prefrontal cortex—the area of the brain linked more to reason and judgment." Adult responses were thus more intellectual while teen responses were "more from the gut." Due to this difference, Weinberger, Elvevåg, and Giedd stress how essential it is for teens to receive guidance from parents "and other adult institutions" while their "decision-making circuitry is being formed" (2005: 2). Although this recommendation is a worthy one, it is also the case that such options are often entirely unavailable and sometimes unpalatable to war-affected youth. Another option is that youth may be influenced by "adult institutions" such as military commanders who direct their impulsiveness toward the performance of exceptionally dangerous and self-destructive actions.

A second significant youth vulnerability that relates to brain development is what is known as "working memory," which is "required to appropriately guide behavior." This sort of memory "must be constantly updated." To do so, mature adults draw from long-term and more recent memories to "effectively guide behavior, freeing us from responding only to our immediate environment, inhibiting inappropriate responses or distractions, and allowing us to plan and organize" (Arnsten 1998: 1). These are the very sort of skills that adolescents and youth are still developing. As a result, although Arnsten cites studies with animals to argue that "exposure to stress impairs the working memory functions of the PFC" (1), it is likely, given that young brains are vulnerable as they mature, that stress (such as varieties of war trauma) impairs the memories of youth much more than those of adults.

Two other traits that relate to the brain development of adolescents in particular promise to help us understand why youth who have survived extraordinarily difficult circumstances are both so vulnerable and so resilient. First, teens take mighty risks (especially those from age fourteen to seventeen, reportedly). Dobbs argues that they do so "not because they don't understand the dangers but because they weigh risk versus reward differently [than adults]: In situations where risk can get them something they want, they value the reward more heavily than adults do." Dobbs highlights a sec-

ond important trait of teenagers: that their search for excitement, novelty, risky situations, and the company of peers collectively makes humans “more adaptive, both as individuals and as a species.” (2011).

What all of these findings about the still-developing brains of adolescents and youth highlight is how young people are naturally, unavoidably, and simultaneously inventive and vulnerable. They take risks, they are impulsive, they are adaptive. In other words, the state of their brains makes them unusually able to deal with both war and postwar circumstances—and be damaged by them. For youth, there is no in-between: they are wired to be adaptive and have short memories. These appear to be excellent survival traits when facing wartime conditions. But being impulsive, lacking sound judgment, and embracing risk also is a recipe for big-time trouble. During and after wars, it can lead to dangerous and extreme life experiences, disability, and death. With their inordinately youthful populations, sub-Saharan Africa’s war and postwar nations appear to contain large numbers of youth who, due to the ongoing development of their brains and their experiences, are oriented to take very big risks and—if they survive them—adapt to challenging situations with an ease that few adults can match.

TRAUMA AND CATASTROPHE

War alters definitions of normalcy. That which took place in Akon, for example, went on for a very long time, and some degree of regularity eventually accompanied the acute hardship. While Kerubino’s actions were hard to predict, those of the Murahalin were not. They were exclusively dry-season dangers, when cover must be found. Similarly, life in a forest *soqoihun* in Sierra Leone undoubtedly created a hellish yet peculiarly everyday reality of its own too. It is a strange and awful way to grow up, and yet that is what many young people had to accept. This sentiment is certainly found in the stories of Matthew, Washington, and Mariamu as well, all of whom did much more than survive what appear to have been tremendously difficult circumstances. They all became accustomed, to some degree, to a war-zone world.

One way of grasping the adjustments that people make to wartime difficulty is to appreciate trauma’s two contexts. Trauma “tends to be defined” in the world of American psychiatry “as the effects of external events impinging on the individual—events that are beyond the usual expectation of what life should be.” But what, exactly, do people expect of life? Apfel and Simon note that the definition just provided “posits a world of reasonable stability and sanity” in which acute trauma (such as a car accident, a

murder, a fire, or a rape) or chronic trauma (such as “some forms of child abuse”) “are distinctly unusual and deemed abnormal.” But for children in war zones (and, one can presume, youth and adults, too), “the world is predictably violent and cruel.” This, the authors state, is “the second definition of trauma” (1996: 6).

Regardless of context, psychological trauma is, in the words of Herman, “an affliction of the powerless.” Victims of trauma are “rendered helpless by overwhelming force” (1992: 33). “The salient characteristic of the traumatic event,” Herman states, “is its power to inspire helplessness and terror” (34). Herman adds that sexual and domestic violence “are so common a part of women’s lives that they can hardly be described as outside the range of ordinary experience.” Similarly, what Herman calls “military trauma” also “must be considered a common part of the human experience” (33). However, although both sets of traumatic experiences may be unexceptional, Apfel and Simon’s depiction of two environments where traumatic events take place—one featuring reasonable stability and sanity, the other highlighting predictable violence and cruelty—is profound. The contrast underscores the gap that can separate peacetime from wartime realities, and reasonably stable lives from exceptionally unstable ones. Maintaining an awareness that the world may look different to those who must accommodate wartime realities is crucial to approaching an understanding of what living through war can do to people.

Discussions of trauma have become a ubiquitous feature of research and reporting about war and postwar environments. Psychological studies routinely document extensive trauma within war-affected populations. Drawing on research data carried out a year after Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, Neugebauer and his colleagues, for example, relied on “measured traumatic exposures” of Rwandans aged eight to nineteen “using an inventory of possible war time experiences and post-traumatic stress reactions with a checklist of symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)” (2009: 1033). The research team’s findings suggested that “at the limits of catastrophic man-made violence, psychological resilience among youth is all but extinguished” (1033–1034). This sort of psychological analysis, which relies on Western theories, research methods, and analytical frameworks, has attracted at least two kinds of criticism. First, it appears to presume vulnerability instead of resilience, relying “on assumptions about the difficulties which children and young people have in coping with the distressing experiences of armed conflict” (Cairns 1996, cited in Eyber and Ager 2004: 189). A second critique centers

on the adaptation of PTSD, which reportedly originated as a diagnosis of the psychological problems that American soldiers in the Vietnam War exhibited (Eyber and Ager 2004: 189–190), to conflict contexts that do not include Westerners. Critics stress that “the concept of trauma originated within a specific (American) cultural setting, and does not translate into other social, cultural and political contexts” (Bracken and Petty 1998; Summerfield 2001, cited in Eyber and Ager 2004: 190).

There has been pushback against both of these critiques. A particularly forthright example is presented by Dyregrov and colleagues, who call this sort of criticism a “denial of trauma” (2002: 135). Directing their attacks mainly at those who deny the presence of trauma in war-affected children, the authors argue that it is not just adults (including parents and teachers) who self-servingly deny the trauma of children. Members of the international community do so as well: “If the international community is able to say that children are not traumatized, and that the natural healing systems within their cultures, as well as children’s inborn resiliency, will heal their emotional wounds, then we don’t have to assume responsibility [for children] or we can do away with our guilt feelings” (136). Regarding the criticism that trauma is tied to Western and not non-Western cultures, the authors argue, just as forcefully, that “although trauma takes place in a cultural context, individuals will experience it. There is reason to believe that there is a universal biological response to trauma . . . where at least the reexperiencing and arousal symptoms [of individuals] have a biological basis” (139). The authors conclude that “brutal events override ethnocultural variations” (140).

Dyregrov’s team appears to overstate resistance to recognizing the universality of trauma. Indeed, while research on war-induced trauma may bear out the idea that severe war experiences create particular symptoms in individuals regardless of their culture or place of origin, the label of *post*-traumatic stress disorder appears problematic. Three examples of the approach of Western mental health analysts to this challenge shed light on ways in which it is being addressed. A study by Gregory and Embrey illustrates the poor fit between the Western-generated concept of PTSD and the lives of a great many war-affected children and youth living in Africa and beyond. In their study of former child soldiers from Liberia, Gregory and Embrey define PTSD simply: “People who exhibit PTSD (compared with those who do not) become ‘stuck’ in the trauma and keep reliving it in thoughts, feelings, or images” (2009: 53). However, the researchers found that the PTSD label could not account for the extreme and prolonged nature of the wartime experi-

ences of their subjects. So they created a new term: profound catastrophic trauma (PCT). This new category “seems to illustrate the conditions where child soldiers were exposed to and often perpetrated multiple, chronic, and life-threatening trauma” (55). The authors’ definition of PCT suggests that, for them, they are entering into entirely new territory.

It is well worth reflecting on the reasons why Gregory and Embrey felt the need to invent the PCT term. Relying on the PTSD concept didn’t work because PTSD implicitly assumes that relative stability and peace existed in the diagnosed person’s life *before* the trauma hit. No such assumption is relevant for children and youth who grow up in times of war and profound instability. Such young people may have no experience of relative peace. Mentioning that Liberia had experienced “17 years of conflict,” the authors state that their subjects were “exposed to years of impending danger.” As a result, the children “may have experienced anticipatory anxiety” long before they became child soldiers (2009: 55).

The authors’ cautious definition of PCT suggests that they are trying to grasp a realm of experience that is new to them. The PCT concept constitutes an attempt by a pair of Western social scientists to come to grips with a central feature of childhood for the war-affected: the experience of intense and prolonged wartime insecurity and threat. Children may begin to experience conflict, or the palpable threat of conflict, from a very early age. They may be born into it. Tentatively, Gregory and Embrey describe the new psychological realm that the child soldier veterans have unveiled to them: the young ex-combatants’ “prolonged exposure to potential trauma likely caused a cumulative and gnawing day-by-day erosion of their emotional and psychological development” (2009: 55).

A similar realization inspired other researchers, including Miller and Rasmussen and Diamond, Lipsitz, and Hoffman, to seek ways to probe the ongoing traumatic stress that wars frequently generate. Like Gregory and Embrey, Diamond, Lipsitz, and Hoffman also highlight the limitations of the concept of PTSD. They assert that PTSD refers to “the residual and prolonged psychological, emotional, and behavioral impact of traumatic experiences” that already have occurred (2013: 101). However, many of the Israelis the authors observed “did not identify a specific, prominent, terror-filled traumatic event” (102). Their traumatic experience was not an event from the past but a fluid part of everyday life. To address the sort of “prolonged, continuous traumatic stress” found in conditions of “war, terrorism, and civil strife,” the authors propose a different approach. Their ongoing traumatic stress response (OTSR) framework

“is determined by real and *external* environmental factors in the *present*.” The contrast between OTSR and the sort of “*internal* psychological effects of a *past* trauma” associated with PTSD is stark (100; emphasis in original).

Miller and Rasmussen’s analysis supports the idea that the ongoing nature of war and organized violence generally grinds people down. They highlight the impact of “daily stressors,” which they consider “highly stressful conditions . . . such as poverty, social marginalization, isolation, inadequate housing, and changes in family structure and functioning” (2010: 8). These stressors “represent ongoing and often chronic threats to psychological wellbeing” which “may gradually erode people’s coping resources and tax their mental health” (12). Miller and Rasmussen conclude that daily stressors must be included in models that aim to “explain patterns of distress in war-affected populations” (14). Quite unlike analyses of PTSD, with its focus on the past, the analyses of these three sets of authors (Gregory and Embrey; Miller and Rasmussen; and Diamond, Lipsitz, and Hoffman) collectively highlight the heavy, relentless strain that wars—and, quite often, postwar eras—routinely create.¹¹ War and postwar worlds often feature “predictably violent and cruel” environments (Apfel and Simon 1996: 6) that yield a near-constant psychic pounding.

Given that the distress, instability, and violence that conflicts unleash can menace young people in Africa and elsewhere for long periods, what can be done about the situation? To assess how the problem is addressed, Wessells argues that we first must get the cultural context right. He points out significant limitations to individualized interventions that are “steeped in a medical model constructed by Western psychiatry and psychology.” In addition, “in many cultures, it is inappropriate for individuals to tell their problems to someone they do not know, and there is no basis for professionalized counseling” (2004: 253). In another publication (which Wessells coauthored), the authors use the case of Angola to illuminate just how differently psychic maladies can be attributed and addressed. Quite unlike Western diagnoses of trauma within individuals, “spiritual cosmology colors the interpretation of traumatic events in Angola” (Wessells and Monteiro 2004: 328). A boy who watched his parents being killed and fled his village might subsequently “present symptoms of trauma such as sleep disturbances and concentration problems associated with flashbacks.” But in Angola, the source of the boy’s troubles may be deemed spiritual. Unable to provide a ritual burial for his slain parents, “the boy might believe that his parents[’]

spirits lingered unavenged and caused problems for him and those around him" (328). The source of the boy's problems may be "spiritual distress" (328), not trauma. Furthermore, the authors state, the response is not to treat the individual boy for trauma, as in the West, but to repair the "spiritual discord" that the unburied dead can create for entire communities (329).¹²

If the malady at hand is thought to have a spiritual source, as is often the view in Angola and many other African contexts, then the response must engage with the spiritual world. This is where the debate over the effectiveness and efficacy of healing ceremonies comes in. Honwana draws from research in rural areas of Mozambique and Angola to assert that families, traditional chiefs, and local healers are "healing the social wounds of war" by "using the means available to them to restore peace and stability to their communities" (2006: 134). The families, chiefs, and healers draw on the idea that, if war pollutes communities and its members, then rituals must be used to purify the polluters. In both countries, Honwana states, "war is conceptualized in opposition to society as a space without norms or as a place where social norms are routinely violated." Pollution derived from "contact with death and bloodshed" must be addressed through ritual. A returning child soldier, for example, is deemed "not himself" because he has violated fundamental social norms" that encompass "the physical, familial, and spiritual domains." Communally witnessed rituals are thus required for "purifying his body, quieting his demons, and reincorporating him into the community" (105). The community dimension is also present in healing rituals among the Acholi of northern Uganda. Finnström relates how a former healer defined *cen* as "the spirits of people who died violently" (2008: 159). Through public healing sessions involving community members and relatives of the person who had been exposed to *cen* spirits, traditional healers "are able to communicate and negotiate with and eventually capture *cen* and release the victim from its grip" (160; my emphasis).

One must be careful not to embrace ritual healing ceremonies blindly. Nongovernment organizations operating in postwar settings have been warned not to "uncritically accept, or romanticize, 'traditional' rites and ceremonies even in situations where such practices have not previously existed" (Dowdney 2007: 7). The warning is well deserved. In one reported case in Sierra Leone, female youth and girls who had formerly been associated with military groups sought to go through the traditional women's initiation ceremony (*bondo*) as a way to reintegrate into their former communities. They

viewed *bondo* “as essential for their well-being and as an expression of their womanhood.” Not participating would undermine their “sense of identity and belonging.” However, while embracing *bondo* was what the girls and female youth sought, the ceremony normally features female genital cutting, which “contradicts international human rights standards” and is a practice that “most Western humanitarians [among many others] regard as a significant protection issue” (Ager et al. 2010: 86). In another part of Sierra Leone, no ritual healing traditions existed. Coulter’s work among the Kuranko found that female youth who had been “kidnapped, raped, drugged, and forcibly conscripted” by rebel military groups during the war had an extremely difficult time after returning to their rural communities of origin. Having grown up “in a setting totally dominated by youth” and detached from their cultural moorings, “they were punished, ostracized, and even medicated when they returned home.” Unlike in “many other war-torn societies,” Coulter explains, “in northern Sierra Leone there were no rituals or reconciliatory ceremonies that could ‘wash’ fighters from blood, death, and shame” (2009: 248).

However one interprets the psychological/spiritual/communal wounds of war and metes out remedies for it, two things are clear about whether and how African youth recover from war. First, it is mostly about communities. The ability to move on from war seems to rely heavily on the cultivation of community belonging. This is suggested by research with former child soldiers in Sierra Leone by Betancourt and colleagues, who found that community acceptance was “an important predictor of reduced depression over time.” It also supported improved confidence and prosocial behavior (2010: 1090). In another example, refugees entering Tanzania from Rwanda “sought solace from traumatic events by attending a succession of Christian and Muslim events” regardless of their religious affiliation (Sommers 1998: 5). During interviews, refugees related that the simple act of singing or praying with others was soothing, particularly soon after they had arrived in a camp. Some eventually joined new religious congregations (7). In another example, a study with adolescents in Sierra Leone led researchers to conclude that “the failure to maintain healthy attachments to others is a serious threat to developmental competence for adolescents coping with war” (Kline and Mone 2003: 329). The problem comes with how “community” is defined. Normally much more attention is paid to rural communities than urban neighborhoods—and to old-style, traditional concepts of rural communities. African government and international agency personnel alike routinely equate “community leaders” with the local establishment: elders, leaders



A struggling ex-combatant in rural Burundi poses before his house in 2006. He related that he had few friends and often had nightmares about his experience as a soldier.

of women's groups, local government officials, youth leaders, police chiefs, teachers, religious leaders, and the like. Yet Coulter's descriptions of female youth being ostracized by their communities are not at all unusual. In many cases after wars, some youth are accepted by the local establishment while many others are not. Sometimes youth are in a sort of standoff with established leaders. Some youth never even venture to their former rural homes after wars end: they head straight to cities, which usually are overrun with youth. This approach to communities is both widely accepted and inherently problematic. I will revisit this issue in the next chapter.

Second, regardless of where youth go, the communities they belong to, and the peer groups they run with, one method for dealing with horrible memories and experiences during wars is common: don't talk about them in public. In postwar Uganda, among the Banyankore, for example, Tankink found that "actively forgetting is an important way of dealing with painful memories. Forgetting is considered to be the best way to deal with them" (2004: 8). In postwar Sierra Leone, Coulter found virtually the same thing.

The female youth whom she interviewed had all endured severe experiences as members of military units. Coulter found that “keeping quiet was . . . seen as the best way to move on in life and to forget the violent past. Many girls were encouraged by friends, family, counselors, and others to keep busy and refrain from being idle, and in this way it was believed that their emotional and behavioral problems would cease” (2009: 250). In her account of the ways in which Pentecostal survivors of Sierra Leone’s civil war transformed “demonic memory into Pentecostal memory,” Shaw also noted a “reluctance to reproduce the war by discussing it publicly” (2007: 89, 68).

The idea that one can actively force upsetting memories into the background is embodied in language. In their research with male youth who were former combatants with the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, Annan, Brier, and Aryemo found that friends and family regularly advised youth that they “should ‘forget’ what happened” to them as soldiers (2009: 658). However, this advice did not mean that ex-combatants should wipe away wartime memories. One of these former combatants, who was fluent in English as well as his local language (Luo), explained that while the Luo verb *wilo wic* translates as “to forget” in English (658), its precise meaning is much more subtle. *Wilo wic*, he explained, “is not forgetting exactly. It means that the kind of memory is reduced. . . . Even if you are thinking of something, you try to suppress it, the burning thought. You try to think of something else.” (659). For many African youth who have survived wars, willing oneself, as best as is possible, to suppress or minimize deeply disturbing memories is a survival strategy that combines a means to move on with a hope for gaining community acceptance. Notably, Boothby’s research with former child soldiers in Mozambique suggests that avoidance strategies don’t always work. Although the “severity of post traumatic stress symptoms is reduced by conscious efforts to not dwell on troubling thoughts and feelings” (2006: 166), some are unable to do this. When some former child soldiers are “confronted with painful memories they tend to become consumed by them, often withdrawing from daily activities and routines” (167).

In the end, the cultural tendency to try to suppress or hide disquieting memories and realities invites doubt about whether war-affected youth are quite as resilient as some studies suggest. To be sure, avoiding or sublimating memories, or processing them through cultural or religious ritual, appears to benefit some, and perhaps many, who live through African wars. At the same time, resilient people can still have nightmares and searing memories

of traumatic experiences. Wherever we come down on this issue, it should be remembered that we are talking about only those who survive war. We know next to nothing about African children and youth who, due to war-time experiences, either fatalistically enter situations where dying is likely or actively commit suicide. Suicide in particular is something that, in my research experience in war and postwar Africa, people are uncomfortable talking about. The only place where direct mention of it regularly came up was in postwar South Sudan, where women openly discussed wives who poison themselves to escape their husbands and, as one female youth characterized it, “go to a better life” (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 5). How often does this occur during or after African wars? We do not know.

Moving Forward

It is easy to underestimate the impact of African wartime experience on young people. The orientation toward community belonging can lead many youth to dwell in groups, which quite often consist of peers of the same gender and with similar past experiences. Most appear to be resilient and many seem upbeat.

But the apparent reality is deceptive. Cultural orientations turn people away from troubling histories, emphasizing silence and a general avoidance of discussions of the past (at least in public) or terse understatement about what really took place. There is much to hide. A female youth who was raped or taken in by a wartime military group (or both) may not want others to know this, as it might collapse her social standing and make marriage prospects even more difficult (harder to conceal are any children that result from such circumstances). Male youth may not want people to know that they were veteran combatants, since that can make it much harder to return to their family homes or find a job and much more likely that they will be roughed up by policemen and suspected as criminals. Even if wartime pasts are hidden, they may remain hard to shake off. Some youth turn to drugs and alcohol, habits that many had picked up during times of war, to help them leave the past behind and ease present tensions.

Wars and unsteady postwar circumstances also send uncounted numbers of youth (as well as children) underground, trapped by adults or snapped up by syndicates and falling into what amounts to contemporary slavery. Many others dwell on the social margins. It has not been uncommon for me to discover during fieldwork that substantially more youth reside in villages or neighborhoods than local officials indicate. While it is possible that village and neighborhood establishment leaders know about such youth, it is more likely that they do not. The leaders may routinely omit them from the rolls

of community membership and disregard them as “bad boys” and “bad girls” who take drugs or drink booze and refuse to do and behave as elders dictate.

Yet at the same time, as outlined in chapter 2, the irony is that wars thrust female and male youth into situations where they had to become independent and deal with wrenching circumstances on the fly. These hard-won talents may remain overlooked or discounted when youth look for work or social acceptance. Hiding the past can mean that the impressive array of survival, leadership, and other skill sets that youth learned during wars remain buried, too.

This chapter investigates four prominent issues that sculpt the postwar trajectories and priorities of youth. The first section analyzes how adulthood expectations influence what youth do in the aftermath of conflict. The second assesses the expansion of sexual violence, mainly against girls and female youth, and its broad impact on youth lives. The third examines youth migration to cities, a critically important youth destination during and after wars. I end the chapter by considering the imprint of alienation and exclusion on the lives and views of most war-affected African youth.

The Adulthood Quest

Attaining and retaining adulthood is the most crucially overlooked youth issue in Africa. As Honwana has highlighted, “Youth are the majority of Africa’s population, but they have been pushed to the margins of their societies and live in a limbo between childhood and adulthood” (2012: 165). In war and postwar African nations, and many others as well, the ability or failure of youth to achieve manhood and womanhood and, should they be successful, to retain adult status, gets at the crux of differences between what youth must do and what elders and government and international institutions want them to do. The challenge of adulthood drives the priorities of many youth. The stigma of failed adulthood can be a source of public humiliation so unyielding that it can lead young people toward destructive and self-destructive ends. In some cases, the prospect of failed adulthood is less threatening and calamitous. But even then, other kinds of outcast labels and identities, tied to the absence of success as an adult, still may apply. There is no question that an elemental need in war-affected Africa and well beyond is finding out whether youth can become adults and what happens if they fail.

Meeting the expectations of culturally determined adulthood norms is

nearly always a tall task, even in stable conditions, and even for relatively well-off youth. In situations where wars are or have taken place, attaining or retaining prescribed adulthood mandates is still more challenging. This is particularly the case for male youth, as manhood expectations can be as exacting as failure is enveloping. The supremacy of masculinity and manhood, so common in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, must be demonstrated consistently.

The case of refugees from Somaliland illustrates how changes wrought by war undermine this expectation. Somali society mandates that men should dominate, provide for, and protect the domestic sphere while at the same time publicly demonstrate their manhood in a variety of ways. It is difficult enough to achieve manhood in times of peace, much less in a world unseated by warfare. Somali culture defines a “real” Somali man as a male who is *ragamino*. This elemental manhood attribute contains three elements: being tough and brave (*geesi*), being helpful (*deeqsi*), and having oratorical skills (*aftahan*). Hansen points out that these qualities all arise from the demands of life as a nomad, since such a life “is believed to be tough, dependent on the social network of the clan, and relying on an oral culture” (2008: 1112). Being a man, moreover, is tied to expansive ideas about masculinity: “men are thought to be strong and hard and as such bring all hard parts of the body” to their children. Accordingly, “teeth, genitals, bones and reason are thought to be acquired from the father” (1112). Women contribute the “soft” aspects of the body to their children (blood, hair, skin, flesh, veins, nails, muscles, and matrilineal relations). Women are also thought to be “more prone to be sick, emotional and to be possessed by spirits” (1112–1113).

This heavily gendered approach to the bodies of progeny provides, in Hansen’s view, the rationales for female and male circumcision, which constitute how male and female Somalis enter adulthood. In symbolic terms, “female circumcision makes the girl more feminine,” Hansen explains, “as it removes the genitals inherited from the father . . . [that are] seen as something male” (Talle 2003: 41–42; cited in Hansen 2008: 1113). Male circumcision, in direct contrast, aims to remove the soft, “feminine” part of the male body (the foreskin), thus making males more masculine (Boddy 1982: 687, cited in Hansen 2008: 1113).¹ Provocatively, Hansen merely alludes to the excruciating and appalling reality of female circumcision (or mutilation) and the extensive social and physical damage that it can cause. In fact, “the Somalis practice the infibulation form of circumcision, which in surgical terms is considered the most severe intervention” (Talle 2007: 96). Known as the Type III form

of female genital mutilation, it entails “the excision of part or all of the external genitalia and then, through infibulations, stitching the vulva closed, leaving only a small opening for urination and menstruation.” The infibulation is “often repeated after each childbirth.” The medical consequences of female genital circumcision (or mutilation) include “haemorrhage, infections from unsterile cutting instruments, ulceration of the genital region, urinary problems, menstrual disorders, sexual dysfunction, infertility, and later, pregnancy and birth complications.” Death “as a result of the mutilation or its repercussions” is not uncommon (Pereda, Arch, and Pérez-González 2012: 560). The extent of female genital circumcision (or mutilation) in Africa is absolutely staggering: the estimated “number of women aged 15 and older who have undergone” the practice “in African countries is 85.8 million and the number for girls aged 10–14 is 13.8 million, totaling 99.6 million women and girls” (Yoder, Wang, and Johansen 2013: 201). Despite these realities, Hansen emphasizes the symbolic purposes of circumcision, which endows specific properties in manhood and womanhood. Male circumcision represents “a phallic exposure representing male privilege to venture into (‘colonise’) the outside non-domestic world.” Female circumcision, in direct contrast, is “about closure and preservation or covering of the female reproductive organ.” As a result, Somali culture expects men to be “exposed, open, public and strong whereas women should be closed, reserved and oriented towards the household” (Hansen 2008: 1113).

Hansen also traces what happened to Somalis who fled war in Somaliland and settled in the United Kingdom. It is there that a virtual role reversal has taken place, in which masculinity and manhood are threatened while femininity and womanhood strengthen and expand. As the refugees find themselves in an entirely different cultural context, “the distinction between women being closed and inside, whereas the men should be open and outside, is challenged as more and more women work outside the house and gain a social role and status in society, and more and more men stay at home and appear to be fading away in terms of social status and recognition.” The change in status has exceptional impacts, since women, through advanced education, work, and general life in a foreign world, find themselves in situations where they are no longer dependent on men or extended families. Meanwhile, men “are not proud, independent individuals any longer” (2008: 1117). “Circumcision,” Hansen concludes, “is a ritual of purification, of creating clear and fixed identities where they do not exist.” But war and flight have fundamentally scrambled the identities of males and females, leaving Somali

women emboldened and men undermined and weakened. Hansen ends with the comment that “today there are no clear and fixed identities for Somali men as ideals of Somali masculinity are challenged both in diaspora and in Somaliland” (2008: 1124).

A glance at general manhood expectations in sub-Saharan Africa sheds light on the challenges of normative manhood across the entire region. Men must attain “some level of financial independence, employment, or income” and then start a family. In rural areas, “manhood, marriage, and work are highly associated with access to land” (Barker and Ricardo 2006: 161). As with the Somali refugee men that Hansen describes, “men’s social recognition and their sense of manhood suffer when they lack work” (162). Another expectation of manhood concerns sex and sexual relations. “Under prevailing norms in Sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide,” Barker and Ricardo explain, “young men are expected to be knowledgeable, aggressive, and experienced regarding sexuality and reproductive health” (Barker 2000; cited in Barker and Ricardo 2006: 170).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity captures two ideas about gender relations that would seem, at least initially, to be contradictory. The first is that relations are fundamentally rigid and hierarchical, with men wielding power over women. As Connell and Messerschmidt have noted, hegemonic masculinity emerged in the mid-1980s as a concept that represented the “most honored way of being a man.” It sets a standard that all men in a society are expected to meet, and it ideologically legitimates “the global subordination of women to men” (2005: 832). The second idea centers on the fact that, while hegemonic masculinity “refers to a male-centered order that gives men, instead of women, primary access to power and privilege” (Leatherman 2011: 17), not all men receive the same degree of access. Quite the contrary: for many men, hegemonic masculinity is a double-edged sword because it is practically impossible for many if not most males to meet the expectations of manhood.

It is important to underscore the implicit class dynamic in all of this. Many elite male youth have reasonably good prospects for reaching and maintaining manhood expectations. But in too many situations, the huge majority of male youth have almost no shot. The prodigious laundry list of prerequisites of manhood is much too daunting. This is particularly the case in war and postwar environments that, in nearly all cases, feature enormous youth populations; weakened economies, governments, and school systems; and blatant and dramatic social and economic inequalities. As a result, meet-

ing expectations such as achieving steady work and financial independence, becoming sexually active, securing a socially recognized marriage, entering fatherhood, and leading, controlling, and protecting one's family is inordinately hard. As Correia and Bannon note, "For many men, because they live in low-income, economically marginalized, or conflict-affected areas, or because they are disabled, it is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to fulfill the roles contained in the hegemonic masculinity model" (2006: 248). It should be noted that there is no equivalent to hegemonic masculinity for females and femininity. Hegemonic femininity is thought to exist, but only within the framework of masculine dominance. As Charlebois relates, "downplaying personal abilities, emphasizing heterosexual desirability, and seeking male validation" are constituents of hegemonic femininity, which forms "a complementary and subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity" and leaves women undermined and disempowered (2011: 138, 137).

Yet hegemonic masculinity threatens many men as well. Two characteristics of hegemonic masculinity can invoke spirals of failure and expansive damage. The first is the emasculating experience of public humiliation. Men are pressured to conform to "the dominant ideals of manhood." Those who cannot achieve them "are often socially sanctioned, belittled, or ridiculed" (Correia and Bannon 2006: 246). The second concerns the determination to demonstrate or exert power as a failed man. Lwambo finds that "sense of failure [in men] often results in unhealthy outlets for asserting masculinity such as the use of alcohol as a marker of manhood" (2011: 8). Other outlets include illicit and criminal behavior, substance abuse, and suicide. Another significant and widely applied option is for men to carry out "violence and aggression against women and children, because it is one of the few remaining ways they can demonstrate power over others and feel like a man" (Correia and Bannon 2006: 249, 248). This last tendency is common in war and post-war Africa (it is addressed in the next section). The capacity for hegemonic masculinity to diminish women and men is considerable.

Eastern DRC presents an illuminating case of how the mixture of unrealistic manhood requirements and war's impact on everyday life can yield terrible consequences for individuals, families, and societies. Lwambo's research with youth in eastern DRC paints a picture of masculinity under siege and female youth and women grappling with expanding responsibilities and violence. Masculinity in eastern DRC, she explains, is not an attribute that males automatically receive. Instead, it is "a way of being" that men must

constantly “perform and assert.” Much is at stake, since if a man fails to do this, “he is reduced to the inferior status of a woman” (2011: 12). The need for men to perform manhood in order to retain it invites desperate measures that are ultimately destructive for themselves and others. As Lwambo notes, “Performance of strength and dominance can . . . turn into violent behaviour, performance of sexual prowess into sexual aggression and public performance of generosity into abandonment of the private sphere, e.g. the household.” It is notable to realize how, in Lwambo’s words, “women co-create ideals of masculinity through the expectations they place on men.” Regardless of their social and economic status, Lwambo found that her female respondents expected “men to guide, protect and support them. Their idea of empowerment [was] to demand respect, rights and liberties *within* a patriarchal system” (12; emphasis in original).

War in eastern DRC has not altered “the most important prerequisite of a ‘real man’”—wealth. In cities, this translates into the sort of status symbols that very few men can afford: “cars, luxury housing and costly leisure activities” (Lwambo 2011: 14). Paradoxically, war and the destruction and deprivation it creates have *increased* expectations on men. The rise of eastern DRC as a conflict zone brought “omnipresent NGO workers” into the region. In the city of Goma, Lwambo found that the lifestyles, luxury items, good salaries, and high social status of foreign workers altered local definitions of manhood for ordinary Congolese workers.² As a result, male youth “dream of different, more prestigious occupations that are accessible only through higher education”—which most either do not qualify for or cannot access.³ In addition, the insecurity of war “has turned farming into a highly unstable sector, arguably even more so than mining.” Inflated aspirations and danger on the ground has given men who farm “the stigma of weakness” (14). And so, making decisions similar to those of Somali refugee men in Britain (Hansen 2008) and male youth in South Sudan (Sommers and Schwartz 2011), men in eastern DRC refuse work that is seen to be beneath their status as men. Increasing numbers of men in eastern DRC refuse to do any farmwork at all, preferring to view farming exclusively as women’s work (Lwambo 2011: 14).

The consequence of this high selectivity about work sheds light on how male youth and men react to threats to their manhood by effectively making life considerably worse for themselves and their families. In eastern DRC, the downfall for men without an income is colossal. Many of Lwambo’s male respondents “linked lack of income to lack of personal value and male self-esteem.” Some responded to “the humiliation of not being able to provide”

for their wives and children by abandoning them. Women filled the family income gap with work. In eastern DRC, some also are able to take advantage of new educational opportunities. This in turn sets the stage for an increase in domestic violence by husbands against wives, as “many women demand more rights within the household and within society, while men hold on to their claims of authority.” “With their own gender identity at stake,” Lwambo finds, “men do not regard an economically successful wife as an asset, but as a nuisance” (2011: 15).

Masculinity under threat in eastern DRC seems to have led to expanded expectations (using foreign NGO workers with excellent and steady incomes as their manhood models) and reduced work options. Men have thus met “social transformation with resistance” as they have sought “to defend their privilege” (Lwambo 2011: 16). The final holdout, tragically, is “the profound sense of entitlement to sex among Congolese men.” This is a critical element in Lwambo’s work because “the idea that [masculine] power is connected to sexual prowess” appears to be the last, if not the only, holdout of manhood in eastern DRC and elsewhere. Women reported domestic violence “as a general rule,” and reports of sexual violence by civilian men appear to be widespread (not including high levels of rape by military forces in eastern DRC) (19). Tragically and alarmingly, the last vestige of male identity in eastern DRC (and, it would most certainly appear, far beyond) is the performance of awful acts of aggression. While this trend may be more pronounced in eastern DRC, Barker and Ricardo note that, across Africa, “too many young men are socialized into versions of manhood that encourage sexual aggression toward girls” (2006: 167).

Although Lwambo mainly focuses on married men and women, the main themes she highlights resonated strongly in my 2010 field interviews with male and female youth in and around the town of Kenema in eastern Sierra Leone. There, the hold of manhood expectations remained strong. The expectation that men must support their families with a reasonable and steady income runs rampant through many societies within and far beyond war-torn Africa. One male youth of twenty-nine living in a rural area near Kenema said he’d never gone to school and described his status as “married—but I quarrel.” His work was backbreaking: he “harvested sand,” hauling it from the riverbed to the roadside, where it could be sold to building contractors. In postwar Sierra Leone, he said, “it’s only money that makes you a man. That’s why we’re suffering to get it. You can have land, but if you harvest little you still aren’t a man.” Harvesting sand did not make you a man: the take was far

too small. Men in town with incomes, however, who “rent their house and leave some area for the family to sleep”—they were “definitely” men.

It is striking to note, in an impoverished, postwar world, how varied the definitions of manhood have become. A group of male youth and men, all of whom had accepted menial work to make a living, debated the manhood definition. “If you impregnate a woman, then you’re a man,” a youth of twenty-seven stated. A man of thirty-nine set the bar higher: “If you are able to be responsible for a child, then you’re a man,” he interjected. A man of thirty-one countered that “you need more: you should be able to have a self-owned house and educate your children until they can take care of themselves.” Note that there is no mention of actual marriage in these discussions: informal, live-in marriage arrangements seemed to be the only marriage option for most male and female youth whom I interviewed. What followed was a longer discussion about how none of them were able to meet even these reduced standards of manhood (except, one imagines, fathering children). Under pressure to deliver enough income to support the family, some leave their wives and children. As one male youth stated, “Some have lost their families.”

Nonetheless, marriage of some sort seemed to be a widely shared goal for female youth and young women. “If I get a good man,” a female youth with children explained, “he can help. But he may leave early and divorce [me]. I can’t make any predictions. I pray to God to get me a good husband.” Ultimately, it all depends on whether a male youth is able and ready to marry a female youth. In informal marriages, men can decide to remain with their wives and children, or they can leave them. In the view of most female youth whom I interviewed, men were the decision makers, and because so many men stood on shaky ground themselves, it was hard to tell what any of them would ultimately do. As one female youth stated, “Every one of us wants to marry, but we cannot force it.”

In one way, the contrast between male youth and their female counterparts was stark. Female youth identities were not under siege, and there was no insecurity over their ability to become women. For example, when I asked a group of female youth if they could become women, one who was nineteen replied, “It’s not a problem for us.” Another nineteen-year-old female youth agreed, commenting that “we don’t have such problems.” The fact that these and other female youth reported that they did not have to prove themselves to become women resonates in other parts of the world. As Correia and Bannon have noted, “A woman performs her part by merely *being*; for the

man, it requires *doing* something, accomplishing something, or performing something” (Chevannes 2001; cited in Correia and Bannon 2006: 247; emphasis in original). Indeed, female youth placed the same premium on the ability of male youth to support a family before they viewed them as “men.”

The marriages that ordinary male and female youth in postwar Sierra Leone described were informal in nature, without the sanction or recognition of communities. Formal, traditional marriages based on bride wealth appear to be rare in Sierra Leone and neighboring Liberia today.⁴ During the civil wars in the two West African nations, Richards observed that some male youth became soldiers “to accumulate [enough] bride wealth” to formally marry (2006: 204). In South Sudan, just as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, marriage and militarization are connected. High bride prices are driving some male youth to join or rejoin armed conflicts. There were reports in the field of young couples making the potentially perilous choice of eloping together. If the female youth’s family catches them, members may brutally beat or even kill them, especially the male youth. Some evidently elope to militia-controlled areas. In exchange for acceptance of their elopement, the male youth receives a gun, with which he can seek to raid cattle and perhaps use the cattle to pay a dowry in the future (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 5–6). Another means of securing sufficient wealth to marry is for male youth to join gangs (Richmond and Krause-Jackson 2011; cited in Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 6). And just as in eastern DRC, adulthood pressures have made male youth exceptionally selective about the work they will accept. Urban male youth reported that if they accepted physical work, such as hauling and selling water, clearing land, doing construction work, or working in hotels or restaurants, they would run the risk of being publicly humiliated by other male youth, relatives, elders—and female youth. As a government official related, if he does what is culturally considered menial work, a male youth may face “character assassination” from others. Many male youth said that they were afraid of such verbal abuse, particularly from female youth. Such abuse can undermine a male youth’s reputation and narrow his marriage prospects, just as a female youth who works in restaurants may be seen as “spoiled” (no longer a virgin), which can collapse her reputation and bride price (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 9).

Seeking adulthood in the postwar environments of Rwanda and Burundi can be just as challenging. The culturally prescribed method for becoming an adult is virtually identical in both countries. Male youth must build a house before marrying a female youth in a socially recognized wedding

(that is, a legal, formal marriage). Once the couple has children, the man of the house must support and protect them. Through this process, the male youth secures manhood. The achievement of womanhood for female youth is directly connected to, and explicitly dependent on, the ability of male youth to meet manhood mandates: female youth cannot become socially accepted as women until they have a formal marriage and then have children. However, this is an unusually daunting task, in part because the window of opportunity is narrow. Rwandan law prohibits marriages by anyone under age twenty-one. As a rule, a female youth must marry by the time she reaches age twenty-eight (although in some areas it can be as low as age twenty-five: male youth and men debated the cutoff age [Sommers 2012b: 116]). Even if the window extends to age twenty-eight, female youth may have no one to marry. Formal marriages are increasingly rare, mainly because most male youth are unable to get off square one: the marriage prerequisite is a finished house, and few have any realistic chance of completing one (xvi). The cascade of difficulties that follows from this widespread problem includes “informal, live-in marriages, illegitimate children, urban migration, . . . crime, prostitution, [and] AIDS,” as well as “a particularly perilous fate: becoming an *inzererezi* (wanderer), which is, essentially, to be homeless and thus a social outcast” (116).

Two factors directly and negatively affect the pursuit of adulthood for Rwandan youth. The first is a remarkably conservative and unyielding culture, dramatically illuminated by the following explanation from a Rwandan government official: “You can’t become a man without building a house. To be a woman, you have to marry. If a woman produces children without a husband, then she’s a prostitute. And if she reaches twenty-eight years old without getting married, then she will be rejected by youth society. She will become an old lady and not a woman” (Sommers 2012b: 115). Rwanda’s government mandates mirror the inflexibility of Rwanda’s cultural directives. Traditionally, Rwandans built their houses on a family compound known as a *rug*. That no longer is legal. The Rwandan government requires all new houses to be built in new community housing areas known as *imidugudu* (the singular is *umudugudu*). Constructing a house on a *rug* is hard enough for a male youth. But building a house on an *umudugudu* both breaks with traditional culture and is made almost impossible by government regulations (128). Those regulations that support the national *imidugudu* policy have created a housing crisis in rural and urban Rwanda. As a result, “Rwanda faces the imminent prospect of producing almost an entire generation of failed adults” (193).

In neighboring Burundi, despite essentially identical adulthood prerequisites the situation was virtually the reverse. Interviews with a comparable selection of male and female youth in rural and urban Burundi indicated that “somehow, for Burundian youth, their incapacity to build a house and marry in the fashion that tradition mandated merely symbolized the tough times they faced. Unlike their Rwandan counterparts, striving to attain manhood did not constitute the core element of their lives” (Sommers and Uvin 2011: 4).⁵ The contrast with Rwanda was striking. Burundi’s gruesome civil war undercut the wealth and stability of many Burundians. Yet it seemed to make people more compassionate as well. As a result, Burundian male youth who struggled to complete their houses were less likely to be publicly humiliated as failed men, a consequence that proved common in Rwanda. Government policies played no role in the quest for adulthood by male and female youth in Burundi. There were no housing regulations or other signs of assertive social engineering by the government of Burundi. Finally, Burundian culture was clearly more accepting of young people as they arduously worked to become adults. When compared to Rwandan society, “it seemed as if Burundian society was less attached to the expectation that youth must achieve normative adulthood. It is not the norm that has changed, but rather that Burundians widely accepted that it could not be perfectly achieved, and were willing to accommodate alternatives” (4). As has become commonplace in many parts of Africa, “the age at which young men are marrying is rising as a result of poverty” (Uvin 2009: 128–129). Poverty as a cause of delayed marriage is a factor in other African contexts as well. As Honwana has observed about African youth, “The social processes that formerly enabled youths to make a smooth transition to adulthood have been almost entirely eroded by endemic poverty and chronic unemployment resulting from failed neoliberal economic policies, bad governance, and political crises” (2012: 165). War should be added to this list.

Three themes figure prominently in war and postwar adulthood situations. One is that adulthood mandates of some kind, and the cultural marginalization (or exclusion) they can create, negatively affect youth lives in a variety of ways. In some places, such as Somaliland, South Sudan, eastern DRC, and Rwanda, conservative and strict cultures are making youth lives exceptionally difficult, leaving youth to face grim realities as they strive to achieve and hold onto adulthood. In others, such as Sierra Leone, cultural mandates remain but appear to be increasingly irrelevant and are simply sidestepped. This

can leave youth in a cultural netherworld, where marriages are infrequent, informal, and even when they happen, precarious.

A second theme is the threatened state of masculinity in nearly all contexts examined here. Excepting some elite male youth, most male youth in many war-affected African countries face the prospect of public shame and humiliation if they delay and ultimately fail to marry and gain manhood. Burundi stands as a glowing exception to this tendency, since delays in securing adulthood often are met with empathy, not social condemnation. In contrast, Rwanda's adulthood situation looks to be the gravest, since the combination of a restrictive government and a constricting culture leaves most youth with little chance of ever becoming adult men and women. Unlike all other cases considered here, Rwanda's government, and not just the cultural expectations of society, plays a decisive and overbearing negative role in the lives of great swathes of its young citizens.

A third theme relates to the position of female youth and their search for recognized womanhood. War and postwar contexts appear to have provided some benefits to female youth and young women. Exile as refugees provided some women from Somaliland with the ability to operate beyond the controls of their husbands and relatives. Uvin found that Burundi is a place where "girls and [young] women are encouraged to study as long as they can, [and] where female dynamism and mutual respect between spouses are increasingly sought" (2009: 181). However, female youth and young women in all the other country contexts examined here—eastern DRC, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan—had no such luck. In South Sudan, for example, many female youth are controlled by their parents before marriage and by their husbands afterward. It is a life marked by a lack of freedom and alarming protection threats (Sommers and Schwartz 2011).

Patriarchal authority links to all three of these themes. Highlighting the case of Sierra Leone, Maclure and Denov note that the end of civil war "did not bring an end to an entrenched patriarchal social system that continued to subject girls and women to arbitrary discrimination and abuse" as well as allowing them "limited or no property rights" (2009: 614). Women as well as men may participate in the subjugation of female youth. Mazurana and Carlson warn that married women can dominate unmarried females (here referenced as girls): "We . . . should not automatically assume that older women somehow recognize and empathize with girls' more vulnerable status and hence work to meet their needs; at times, it is older women enforcing patriarchal practices, standards, and violence onto young females" (2009:171).

Richards observes that the dominance of powerful older men in Sierra Leone and Liberia ultimately subordinates male as well as female youth. The practice of polygamy, the legal enforcement of paying bride wealth, and punishment for adultery facilitate marriages between established older men and girls. This form of patriarchal power effectively “blocks a route to social cohesion based on marriage as a freely contracted union between consenting young adults.” It also “keeps poor men as youths . . . well into their middle age.” Richards concludes that “those who join militia forces are sometimes explicit that inability to marry was an important motivation” (2006: 204).

In many countries, including a great many war-affected African states, the following fact powerfully affects female youth: their ability to become women depends on having a man or male youth to marry. When there is no one to marry, as the Rwandan case illuminates, female as well as male youth are trapped, unable to access adulthood. Womanhood, quite often, remains under the dominion of a masculinity that leaves many male youth and men emasculated and many female youth and women constrained, undercut, and endangered. These dual threats underscore the exceptional significance of researching the impact of marriage and adulthood challenges (and, too often, failures) on the lives and priorities of nonelite and sometimes even elite youth.

Intimate Violence

Wars in which civilians are the primary targets—as is the case in most recent major conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa—have unearthed a horrifying rule of thumb: men are killed, women are raped, and children are abducted. Rules of thumb remain necessary, most unfortunately, in part because “conflict mortality data disaggregated by gender are virtually nonexistent” (Kuehnast, Oudraat, and Hernes 2011: 6). In fact, the realities that young people frequently face are even more expansive than this general rule because war also shreds social institutions. Mazurana and Carlson note, for example, that the heat of conflict undermines the main ways in which young people gain protection:

As teachers are targeted and killed schools close down; as health care workers are killed or flee, clinics close their doors or provide only rudimentary services. Teachers and health care and social workers are a frontline of defense for protecting children from the ravages of armed conflict; when they are not there, children are increasingly at risk. Perhaps most importantly, the

killing, disappearance, death, detention, or flight of parents and caregivers results in the existence of hundreds of thousands of single-parent households and tens of thousands of street children, orphans, and child-headed households, some headed by children as young as eight. (2009: 167)

With parents, teachers, and many other adults and institutions eliminated, no longer around, or at risk, a great many young people are consequently left on their own, growing up fast and surviving by their wits while sometimes also bearing the burden of caring for others. They are, in addition, vulnerable to predation. Adolescent boys are “commonly subject to voluntary and forceful recruitment by armed forces and groups.” They “tend to have higher rates of physical injuries due to their participation in fighting.” Meanwhile, adolescent girls “tend to suffer more sexual violations at the hands of members of their own and other fighting forces” (167).

Definitions of what rape and other sexual violations mean are important because they underscore the diversity and intensity of sexual violations in many (but not all) war zones. According to international law, rape is a specific category of crime. It normally refers to “the penetration of the anus or vagina with any object or body part or of any body part of the victim or perpetrator’s body with a sexual organ, by force or by threat of force or coercion, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.” Sexual violence is a broader, more inclusive class of violations. It refers to “rape, nonpenetrating sexual assault, mutilation, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, enforced sterilization, and forced pregnancy” (Wood 2011: 40). Among the most serious physical effects of extreme sexual violence (such as gang rape) is traumatic fistula, which is a rupture involving a female’s vagina and bladder or rectum (or both), which causes feces or urine to leak out and exude a strong odor. Although such a wound can be treated medically, possibilities for treatment may not exist or may be difficult to access in war and postwar contexts. Females with fistula are often divorced by their husbands and shunned by their communities. Traumatic fistula, of course, is not the only result of rape that can undermine a female’s life. Others include “the effects of unwanted pregnancy [from rape] and [the] risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS,” both of which “amplify the psychosocial trauma” arising from rape (Leatherman 2011: 47).

The subject of sexual violence during wars is unquestionably one of the most disturbing and troubling of all subjects related to conflict. In a sense, that is as it should be, since the perpetrators routinely choose to use sexual

violence to rip apart victims and their communities. Rape inserts horror and vulnerability where protection, normality, and safety should be. It is “frequently used as a weapon of war by fighting forces not only to torture the individuals targeted but also to terrorize and destabilize their communities” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2005: 160). An example of this emerges from the DRC, where “militia rape and torture repeatedly, often in public and with relatives, humiliating the victim and their family. Community members feel insecure, vulnerable and socially excluded, exacerbated by the militia vandalising, burning and terrorising the villages” (Mukwege et al. 2010: 164). What seemed to be reliable reports from development and security officials whom I interviewed in eastern DRC in 2005 revealed the primacy of rape in the conduct of local-level warfare in that region. One official described how some militias attacked rural villages there and used rape to control civilians. “Here’s how it works,” the official explained:

One militia comes [into a rural village], rapes all the women and forces others to watch them, so that [the villagers] “belong” to the militia. All the kids [in one village a study team had visited] had grey hair. All of them had been raped. Then, another militia comes in and rapes everyone [again], in order to “own” them and punish them for supporting the other militia.

Normally all the women are raped multiple times. To torture the men, they tie them up and force them to watch the militia rape all of their children (boys and girls) and their wives.

The official added that fistula was common for female survivors of these episodes of “really violent rape” and that men also have been raped in eastern DRC.⁶

By shattering accepted and treasured norms, wartime sexual violence can reach deep into psyches and cultures. War zones are, for example, locations for the rape of pregnant or lactating women; of young girls, which is “taboo across cultures” (Leatherman 2011: 50); and of the elderly. Leatherman asserts that targeting the elderly for sexual violations “is especially difficult to contemplate, not least because in many cultures and especially in societies that retain traditional mores, the elderly are held in special esteem” (50). There is also what Leatherman calls “gendercidal degradation,” which can involve the public display of mutilated genitals or disemboweling pregnant women and then violating the fetus (46, 47).

The case of Rwanda during the horrific 1994 genocide (and simultaneous civil war) sheds light on several dimensions of rape during times of conflict and intense violence. It is significant to note that “in more peaceful times, Rwanda [was] not characterized by a high incidence of rape—quite the contrary” (Taylor 1999: 157). It was also a place where “the representation of [ethnic] Tutsi women as superior in intelligence and in beauty to [ethnic] Hutu women appears to have plagued the psyches of Hutu extremists” who engineered the genocide. This representation is considered “of colonial origin” (177).⁷ Examples of what Taylor categorizes as “special measures of terrorism” during the genocide are all related to extreme sexual violence: “Many Tutsi women suffered breast oblation, or were raped before being killed. Others were impaled with spears from vagina to mouth. Many were forced to commit incest with a male family member before being killed. Pregnant women were often eviscerated. Still other Tutsi women were spared and taken as ‘wives by their persecutors.’” (176) The tendency for many female rape victims to be killed afterward has contributed to the difficulty of precisely estimating how many girls and women were raped during Rwanda’s 1994 genocide (Straus 2006: 52). In addition, unknown numbers of men (in this case, ethnic Tutsi) were among those who were sexually assaulted. Some were also forced to rape Tutsi women or have sex with ethnic Hutu women (Leatherman 2011: 46). Reportedly, nuns also raped men with objects or directed men to rape women (de Brouwer 2005: 13; cited in Leatherman 2011: 44).

In general, although the sexual abuse of males during and after wars is thought to be much less prevalent than for females (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2005: 163), it is difficult to quantify, since male victims have a “great reluctance” to report it (Russell 2007: 22). That said, it most certainly happens: “sexual violence against men and boys—including rape, sexual torture, mutilation of the genitals, sexual humiliation, sexual enslavement, forced incest and forced rape—[was] reported in 25 armed conflicts across the world” between 1996 and 2006 (Russell 2007: 22). Moreover, the Human Security Research Group attacks the “mainstream narrative” about sexual violence during war in part because “little is said about sexual violence against males, while female perpetration is ignored almost completely despite recent evidence indicating that it may be far more prevalent in wartime than is generally understood” (2012: 20). While it is not necessary to go through each and every type of sexual atrocity against females and males here—there are publications that are devoted to this crucially important and profoundly disturbing topic—considering why

sexual violence takes place in so many wars sets the stage for probing some of the ways that sexual violence has had an impact on war-affected African youth.

All wars in sub-Saharan Africa are widely presumed to be hotbeds of extreme sexual violence. However, a review of civil wars across two decades (1980–1999) reveals that “levels of sexual violence in one-third of the wars in Sub-Saharan Africa were low” while “Eastern Europe had a higher proportion of civil wars with mass rape than did Sub-Saharan Africa” (Cohen 2009: 9). More generally, the common presumption that rates of sexual violence in wars are on the rise has been challenged. The Human Security Research Group argues that “hardly any evidence has been produced to support” this claim (2012: 26). On the contrary, “indirect evidence suggests that the absolute level of conflict-related sexual violence has decreased, rather than increased, in recent years. This is primarily because there has been a global reduction in the number of large-scale armed conflicts. If the number and severity of conflicts decreases, we should—other things being equal—expect a decline in conflict-related sexual violence as well” (27). Some of the more popular reasons, or rationales, that are employed to explain why state and nonstate militaries feature sexual violence similarly may be suspect. Cohen and Wood separately present an array of theories to explain why some military outfits feature sexual violence as an instrument of combat. In their collective view, many of the theories either do not hold water or are leaky. These would include the idea that “combatants rape when they want to symbolically demonstrate ethnic loathing or dominance over their ethnic opponents.” Accordingly, Cohen states, “we would expect rape to be most prevalent in ethnic conflicts, where a major cleavage of the war is based on ethnic differences” (2009: 11). Another piece of “conventional wisdom” that Cohen brings forth is that “rape is more likely in countries where women have fewer political rights” (12). She finds both theories to be flawed. “Neither religious fractionalization nor ethnic fractionalization are predictors of wartime sexual violence,” she writes. In addition, “gender inequality is not a predictor for wartime sexual violence” (19). Wood, whose analysis is even more expansive, points to similar trends. She notes, for example, the argument that “leaders persuade soldiers that to be a real man is to assert a militaristic masculinity, with the result that soldiers represent domination of the enemy in highly gendered terms and use specifically sexual violence against enemy populations.” However, Wood finds that “many insurgent and

state armies are very effective all-male fighting forces yet do not engage in mass rape, an indication that not all militarized forms of masculinity lead to sexual violence” (2011: 45, 46).⁸

After Cohen and Wood collectively tear down theories that propose to illuminate why many military groups employ extensive acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence in war zones, what might explain its persistence? Wood highlights two sets of logic. One concerns military strategy. She finds that sexual violence can be implemented “as part of the [military] group’s repertoire of violence against particular populations.” In such cases, commanders contend that the benefits wrought by sexual violence—“a terrorized population, ‘cleansed’ territory, and sated troops”—outweigh potential downsides, such as the assertion that policies advocating sexual violence make soldiers harder to govern, undermine the loyalty of civilians, and violate domestic and international norms. As for the use of rape as a military tactic, Wood argues that “combatants and small units may practice sexual violence that was not ordered” as an instrument of terror or punishment, or as a “reward to [military] service” (2011: 57). Cohen’s main finding is much more straightforward: “Forcible recruitment [into a military group] is a powerful predictor of wartime sexual violence” (2009: 21).

Something critical is missing from these global analyses of sexual violence and warfare. To be sure, many general assumptions about the subject may be incorrect, and particular trends and logics may help explain the presence or absence of sexual violence in conflict zones. Yet the analysis of global trends only accentuates the salience and significance of local context. The fact that Cohen did not find rape to be ubiquitous across all ethnic-centered conflicts, for example, cannot dislodge the fact that sexual violence was both ethnically specific and extremely prevalent during Rwanda’s genocide. With this in mind, I will now probe the local context of youth, war, and sexual violence in Sierra Leone, where the subject of sexual violence arguably has been examined more comprehensively than for any other contemporary sub-Saharan African war (except, perhaps, that in the DRC). The Sierra Leone case thus provides instructive insights into how sexual violence in theaters of war affects male and female youth.

The extensive application of sexual violence by fighting forces during Sierra Leone’s civil war is beyond dispute. As Keen states, “A major part of the abuse of civilians [by the RUF, the main rebel group] consisted of sexual abuse, mostly of women and girls” (2005: 44). The expanse of this abuse is staggering. A Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) publication contains an

estimate that “as many as 215,000–257,000 women and girls in Sierra Leone currently may have been affected by sexual violence” (2002: 59). Using Sierra Leone’s national census statistics of 2004 as a baseline (Statistics Sierra Leone 2006: 4), this would mean that somewhere between 8.47 and 10.12 percent of all females in Sierra Leone (from infants to elderly) experienced some sort of sexual violence during the war.⁹ PHR suggests an even higher proportion: a total prevalence rate for war-related sexual violence in Sierra Leone of 17 percent (2002: 59).

Although Baldi and MacKenzie note that “there was a significant escalation in sexual violence between 1997 and 1999” (2007: 84), when levels of war atrocity reached their zenith, high levels of violations took place across the length of the civil war (1991–2002). The persistence of sexual violence during the war is illuminated by two alarming facts. First, in 1999, when war violence was particularly intense, the total number of insurgents (who are widely believed to have carried out the overwhelming majority of atrocities, including acts of sexual violence) was a mere fifteen thousand, perhaps 40–50 percent of whom were children (Goodwin 1999). Many such soldiers evidently raped very significant numbers of girls, female youth, and women. One detail from Cohen’s interview data with Sierra Leonean ex-combatants sheds light on this phenomenon. “One interviewee spoke with awe,” she relates, “about a fellow combatant who had raped over 200 women” (2009: 20). Second, of the many thousands of Sierra Leonean women and girls who were abducted during the war, an estimated 70–90 percent were raped (Baldi and MacKenzie 2007: 81).

Even these estimates of the number of females that male insurgents raped appear to be low. It is difficult to imagine, having read much of the literature on the subject, how more than a miniscule proportion of females whom the rebels kept managed to avoid rape. Coulter’s interviews with female youth who had been abducted by Sierra Leonean rebel groups suggest that the figure of two hundred rapes performed by a single male combatant may have referred merely to those rapes that took place during military attacks. For it looks unlikely that the sexual encounters of male combatants at their base camps would have been considered rape or sexual violence of any kind. Yet applying the definition of rape shared earlier means that one must consider most of these encounters as rape, too. Vulnerability to rape by many males in rebel camps was evidently much higher if a female youth had not been taken as the “bush wife” of one particular boy or man. One former female abductee remarked that for “those that are not married [i.e., those who were

not bush wives], three to four men will have sex with her [in] a day. In fact, [she paused], it doesn't mean only at night. Even if it is during the day, if [rebel males] feel like it, they will have sex with you" (2009: 129–130). The number of rapists a woman might encounter each day in rebel camps might be even higher: another informant told Coulter that "about five or six will use [a female without a bush husband] for the day or night, [and] if she refuse[s] they kill her" (130). There is evidence that the soldiers raped boys as well, though in much smaller numbers. A study of former Sierra Leonean child soldiers, for example, found that 5 percent of males reported sexual abuse (Betancourt et al. 2011: 26).

Sierra Leone's rebel forces used rape and other forms of sexual violence for a broad set of purposes. Coulter highlights one of them: "initiation into a violent male culture" (2009: 127). Keen mentions several more: "Rebels used rape to violate not only the victim but also the victim's family and the wider society. Public rape added to the humiliation. A range of cultural taboos were deliberately broken, including through forcible incest, and the raping of old women and of breastfeeding mothers. Some victims were raped in mosques, churches, and other sacred places" (2005: 44). Baldi and MacKenzie add to this catalog of intent by listing some of the ways in which rebel soldiers used rape as a strategy "to violate and undermine various social norms." They expand on the forcible incest that Keen mentions by explaining that "in order to sever young soldiers' ties with their families, and to demonstrate their loyalty to the armed group, some boys and young men were forced to rape their sisters, mothers, and even grandmothers" (2007: 81). They add that "fathers were made to watch while their daughters or wives were gang raped. Young girl virgins were targeted and raped. Mothers were raped in front of their children. Pregnant women were raped with objects to try to abort the fetus" (Amnesty International 2000 and Human Rights Watch 2003; cited in Baldi and MacKenzie 2007: 81). These are but a handful of examples of the sexual depravity that took place in Sierra Leone's war zones. Yet despite the awful details of what was an undeniably prominent feature of the civil war, one nonetheless should not equate the wartime experiences of Sierra Leone's female youth with simple victimization. Some abducted girls and female youth were fighters and participated in terror attacks on civilians. Many benefited from the food and many other goods that rebels looted.

Real wars, in other words, probably never embody the sorts of war zones that so many Hollywood-style movies depict, where heroic "good guys" face off against villainous "bad guys"—and then, of course, win. Morality can

become ambiguous or assume new forms in conflict zones. What makes sense to civilians, commanders, soldiers, and retinues of hangers-on and abductees (that is, multitaskers serving militaries as porters, cooks, concubines, wives, spies, and so much more) caught up in real-time war may not make sense—at all—to observers. War produces not just a kind of hell but an otherworldly context in which survival and success accumulate entirely new definitions—and lose their original meanings altogether.

Coulter relates the complex world of female youth caught up in Sierra Leone's civil war with considerable force and detail. She notes that complementary roles are "a recurring feature of gender in much of West Africa" (2009: 58). At the same time, women in the ethnic Kuranko area of northern Sierra Leone (where her field research took place) are mainly subordinate to men. As she explains, the "highly valued female characteristics" in Kuranko culture are "women's submission, servility, and willingness to endure and accept their subordinate position" (142–143). The submissive social and cultural status of Kuranko women, however, does not entirely circumscribe their lives. Sierra Leonean women's societies, notorious in many quarters as institutions that feature female genital mutilation in initiation ceremonies, provide "access to public space in ways not possible for individual women."¹⁰ Coulter provides an example of their fearsome power in local society. Whenever members of a women's society march through a village, all other village residents must rush indoors to avoid "various sorts of gruesome punishments." Coulter joined the villagers in going inside. Meanwhile, the women's society members reached the front door of one home. When the man of the house opened the door, the so-called society devil warned him to stop beating his wife—or else receive a terrible curse. "I did not hear of the man's beating his wife again," Coulter recalls (60).

The volatile mix of women's traditional subordination to men and underlying feminine power appears to be explained by the following fact. "In Sierra Leonean traditional culture," Coulter explains, "women are not believed to be inherently peaceful; on the contrary, women are wild and dangerous and therefore they need to be controlled" (2009: 142). It is this "alternate femininity" that calls for "the continual social process of domesticating women." At the same time, women's secret societies demonstrate how total domestication is not possible: feminine power is just too strong. Such conceptions directly challenge what is thought to be "a typical feature of war-torn societies"—that women are naturally "more peaceful, maternal, and nurturing" than men (241). As discussed below, they also make it much more difficult for female youth

who have endured extraordinary circumstances during war to be accepted into postwar society.

Coulter records a number of illuminating facts about the lives of girls and female youth who had been abducted by rebel forces. A central theme that emerges from her research is that “war rapes in Sierra Leone . . . reflected the low status of rights for women in Sierra Leonean society, which was magnified by the war” (2009: 127). In addition, male combatant cultures were not separate from but instead “had resonance within the larger Sierra Leonean society.” In both settings, “masculinity, to some extent, was defined through multiple sexual relationships” (133). These two factors appear to have set the stage, or opened the door, for extensive and extreme war rape. As mentioned above, it also is clear that breaking social and cultural taboos informed the nature of sexual violence during Sierra Leone’s civil war. Coulter surmises that one of the influences on males carrying out acts of sexual violence was pornography. Reflecting on one recollection from a captured female youth, Coulter notes that “fellatio, and having sex with more than one man at a time, were unheard of” prior to the civil war, and many of her informants described such acts as “unthinkable” (129). How did such foreign practices get to Sierra Leone? Given that elements of Sierra Leone’s war, such as diamonds and action films, “were closely interconnected to the global economy,” Coulter argues that “it should be no surprise that pornography could also have been distributed and consumed by combatants during the war”—and then have directly influenced their sexual behavior (128). Female youth who lived with combatants also related how the heavy and regular use of drugs greatly enhanced the sex drive of males. One recalled that if her bush husband “didn’t go anywhere for the whole day we will be sexing [all day] and the whole night. More especially when he has smoked jamba [marijuana]. That man is never tired of sexing” (130).

When Sierra Leone’s long civil war finally expired in 2002, what became of female youth who had been raped, particularly those who had been fighters or wives or concubines of the rebels? Findings from a number of sources reveal dimensions of the same bitter result: that rape and sexual violence dramatically, inescapably, and negatively change female youth lives in a diversity of ways. One of the most immediate arises when female youth return from wars with children. Due to the fact that sexual violence during the war was widespread, “there is often a supposition that single, young mothers, or mothers who had children at a very young age, were likely victims of sexual violence” (Shepler 2010: 93). Yet this may not always be the case: some of these young mothers were in consensual relationships (including some of those in



An unmarried mother in postwar Sierra Leone in 2010. Orphaned during the war, she related how she was abducted by rebel forces and then endured prolonged sexual abuse by them.

rebel groups: Shepler, for example, notes that some girls and female youth who were part of fighting forces reported that they formed “relationships with particular commanders who protected them from other combatants” [93]). The mothers may be alone with their children because the fathers died during the war or were separated from or abandoned them. What matters for this discussion—and it is likely that this occurs in most if not all post-war contexts in Africa and probably elsewhere—is that single mothers and their children returning from wars regularly face severe social stigma and impoverishment upon returning to their families and communities (Baldi and MacKenzie 2007: 85).

Even if female youth return from war zones without children, they still are likely to be marginalized. Shepler’s research with former girl soldiers in Sierra Leone (some of whom played roles in combat and some of whom did not) underscores the degree of stigmatization that they face. She found that “in many cases it is easier for a boy to be accepted after amputating the hands of villagers than it is for a girl to be accepted after being the victim of rape.” Girls or female youth who return with a child are “espe-

cially vulnerable” because “their babies are sometimes perceived as ‘rebels’ of tomorrow” (2010: 97).

Traditionally, female youth in Sierra Leone should enter marriage as virgins. Yet the drive of many families to marry off daughters remains, even for girls and female youth who arrive home after the war with children in tow. What often ensues is an unfortunate cat-and-mouse game, where the young mothers “slink home anonymously” and “try to keep the whole thing quiet.” Yet this family strategy of “secrecy and hope for eventual marriage” (Shepler 2010: 97) seems highly unlikely to succeed. Shepler describes how some of these young mothers are ultimately either “rejected by their communities” or leave of their own volition to become commercial sex workers or perhaps “return to their commanders in the bush” (97, 98). Denov finds that, even without children, girls or female youth who were raped “were often deemed ‘unmarriageable’ following disclosures of rape” (2006: 336). A persistent theme in much of the literature about the postwar lives of former female combatants in Sierra Leone is that vocational training programs are in high demand but are largely unavailable and, in any case, tend to deliver underwhelming results (e.g., Coulter 2009: 245; Shepler 2010: 97).

Some researchers clearly perceive the lives of many young mothers who had been with military groups in Sierra Leone as inescapably difficult and relentlessly tortuous. Burman and McKay, for example, note that “many girl mothers [interviewed in postwar Sierra Leone] indicated that they just wanted to get back to a ‘normal’ life, but had no way to make a living.” This led to acute marginalization, which, the authors assert, “results in fragmenting and conflicting psychic effects related to discrimination, privatization, isolation and invisibility” (2007: 319, 320). Interestingly, Coulter derived a more varied conclusion from her interviews with the same type of Sierra Leonean girls and female youth that Baldi and MacKenzie, Burman and McKay, Denov, Shepler, and others interviewed: that is, those who had been with rebel military groups during the civil war. She found that those who entered the “girlfriend business,” which entailed having “one or two lovers who would give them money, clothes, and food,” could shift their social status in a positive way. Some of these female youth “who supported their families by ‘loving’ often were exempt from criticism and in fact sometimes had positions of authority within the household” (2009: 246).

By itself, the rise of HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone made the girlfriend business a decidedly “high-risk enterprise” (Coulter 2009: 247). It also was hardly a strategy for a stable economic life, and it may have been possible only

because economic conditions in postwar Sierra Leone are, for the most part, absolutely desperate. That it has become a socially acceptable lifestyle (to some degree, at least) shows how wars can provide, as Coulter found in Sierra Leone, opportunities for males and females to “challenge the received wisdom of previous generations.” However, the costs for such opportunities are inevitably high. For Coulter’s informants, breaking from feminine conventions relied on “constantly stressing and even appropriating their sexuality” (247). It also left them highly dependent on, and vulnerable to, the whims of boyfriends.

A clear threat to female youth engaged in the girlfriend business and other endeavors in Sierra Leone and elsewhere is evidence that war can drastically increase the incidence and intensity of domestic violence. Drawing from field research with women in postwar Liberia and Sierra Leone, Roesch found that all women who were interviewed agreed that their respective civil wars “had fundamentally changed their role as women. Gender roles were seen to have undergone a significant shift as women took on increased responsibilities as breadwinners and heads of household during the [wars] and as women’s empowerment initiatives flourished after the [wars]” (2012: 11). Roesch also found that many women in her sample “faced violent backlash as they achieved success that either eluded their [male] partners or was perceived as threatening” (12). Yet the worst effects of domestic violence were not physical (such as being punched, burned, beaten when pregnant, or having fingers cut off with machetes [10]) but psychological and social. “Shame, humiliation, degradation, alienation and the fear of being judged as a bad mother or bad wife were some of the main concerns that women expressed” during interviews, Roesch reported (10).

Jok’s research with ethnic Dinka women in South Sudan unearthed similar results. He found that “nearly 80 percent of the women we talked to reported having been battered several times throughout their married life for reasons related to refusal of sexual services.” Jok also asked women who got married before Sudan’s civil war began whether spousal abuse had increased since the war had begun. He reported that “they unanimously reckoned that it has always been a part of married life but those women whose husbands joined the rebel movement have experienced increased battering” (1999: 434, 435).

The negative impact of war on males underscores the difficulty of addressing this alarming problem. The challenge of masculinity has been highlighted in different ways. Wessells states, for example, that “family violence skyrockets in most war zones as increased stress and poverty, coupled with gender scripts

that depict women as men's property, engender wife-beating on a wide scale." He adds that a great deal of this sort of violence is "a product of institutionalized patterns of social inequality and gender discrimination" (2006: 87). In contrast, Slegh and Kimonyo's study in Rwanda takes a fairly upbeat tack. The authors highlight that gender-based violence "may increase in post-conflict societies as a result of shattered male egos as well as militarized masculinity identities" (2010: 20). Almost all participants in their research with men and women in Rwanda agreed that "men need to be tough, need more sex and are always ready for sex" (50). They found that "acts of beating and forced sex are considered as warnings [for] and punishments of women who do not [fulfill] their role in a proper way" (51). But they also were optimistic that changing the gruesome dynamic between Rwandan men and women was possible because "men seem to be aware of the immorality of violent behavior, although they may have some problems reflecting on their own acts" (51). They conclude by suggesting a range of ways to promote "positive masculinity and [the] involvement of men and boys in changing attitudes towards women" (53).

The case of girls and female youth formerly with Sierra Leonean rebel groups dramatically demonstrates just how far there is to go to change these attitudes. Many were marked as social pariahs after the war, hiding what happened to them or ending up in high-risk occupations like prostitution. For the most part, recommendations for altering such survival-driven priorities are short on specifics and long on vague calls for change, such as Denov's plea to reform "existing social, political, economic and educational structures and institutions, particularly as they relate to gender" (2006: 339). Shepler, in turn, contends that "it is imperative to draw the connection between gender inequality as structural violence and the more spectacular exceptional violence of war" (2010: 99). But how does one achieve such recommendations? Given the extremely dire circumstances that the researchers collectively describe, most do not provide the sort of detail that can be turned into substantive change. And change, quite obviously, is urgently required. Fortunately, a potentially promising possibility for supporting young mothers formerly connected to armed forces or groups in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Uganda has arisen. With the support of child protection agencies and community advisors, the approach features the involvement of young mothers in both participatory action research and the development of practical initiatives to address specific challenges (Worthen et al. 2013).

While it remains hard to know exactly what to do, it is clear that conser-

vative traditions can trap male and female youth in a prewar culture that no longer exists. As with customary standards, mandates, and expectations for adulthood, sexual and domestic violence in war and postwar environments create lasting difficulties for youth. This is most particularly the case for female youth, who may be brutally exploited, in a sense, simply for what they represent: a means for males to assert or redeem their masculinity. The awful process for achieving such a fleeting end casts a sharp light on the fragility and violence that cultures bottle as manhood, and on the need for females, and womanhood, to absorb toxic cocktails of masculine aggression.

As traditional cultures buckle down after the extremity of war, many youth see no choice but to break out. In so many cases, staying home just won't work: the old ways permeate village life, providing uncertain chances for economic success or social recognition and instead pointing to life on the rural margins. Or villages may just seem unsavory. After all, urban environments are where youth can go to escape confining cultures and seek success. Cities represent not just economic promise but possibilities for personal reinvention. And so, during and after wars, more and more African youth—female as well as male—scramble into town, looking for opportunity and all that is new.

The Logic of Urban Migration

In 1990–1992 I conducted research with Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam. Their profile shed light on many dimensions of urban life for war-affected African youth. Almost all of the Burundi refugees were residing illegally in the Tanzanian capital. They had snuck out of remote refugee settlements and entered the city without official permission or support from either Tanzanian government authorities or officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Since what they were doing was illegal, the refugees practiced *mambo ya kujificha* (the affairs of hiding oneself), claiming to be migrant youth from Tanzania's faraway border with Burundi (Sommers 2001a, 2001c).

Very few were Catholic. This fact stood out because Catholicism has been Burundi's dominant religion for decades.¹¹ Yet by the time of my field research, the advance of Pentecostalism among Burundians had been well underway in both Burundi (Hohensee 1977) and Tanzania's Burundi refugee settlements (Ayok and Mbago 1987). Refugees also explained that Pentecostalism was far more portable than Catholicism in their community. Whereas

Catholics in specific parishes tended to focus on the needs of long-standing members, the refugees told me that newcomers to Pentecostal churches were heartily welcomed as fellow “saved” believers who then were actively supported. Pentecostal refugee networks, in addition, seemed to be significantly stronger than Catholic refugee networks. Pentecostal refugee entrepreneurs, for example, regularly recruited those in the settlements viewed as “saved” (and thus deemed reliable and trustworthy) to come and work for them in Dar es Salaam. Many refugees related that Catholic refugees from Burundi had a much harder time getting to the Tanzanian capital than their Pentecostal counterparts (indeed, I met or heard about exceedingly few Catholic refugees during twenty months of research work in Dar es Salaam). Finally, all indications from my research pointed to the fact that Burundi refugees who made it into Dar es Salaam were, overwhelmingly, male youth. Female youth, much less women or girls, had a substantially harder time finding ways into town: those who were present in the capital usually had arrived with their fathers or husbands. The predominant profile, by far, of Burundi refugees in the city was a male Pentecostal youth.¹²

Years later, in 2005, I visited a program for demobilized soldiers in a small village in the Ituri District of eastern DRC. The attendees comprised perhaps twenty male youth and, disconcertingly, one middle-aged woman. During a program break, I asked the woman in Swahili about her program experience. She related that, unlike all the others, she wasn’t a former combatant. She was attending on behalf of her son, who was. Where was he? I inquired. “Mjini” (In the city), she answered. I then asked why he had gone there. “Maisha ya kizungu” (The white man’s life), she replied succinctly.¹³

Except for the public prominence of male youth in cities, dimensions of life for youth in war-affected African cities—the webs of illegality, the stealth and disguise that inform so many urban lives, the religious lives of young urbanites, and not least, the urban bling and stimulation (big cars, mobile phones, beautiful watches, the latest music and videos, and other articles of “the white man’s life”)—are the sort of issues that are routinely understated or entirely overlooked in literature about developing world urbanization, much less African cities affected by war. To refugee and migrant youth alike, Dar es Salaam is “Bongoland” (Brainland), a highly competitive and fascinating place where you need “brains” and cunning to succeed—indeed, just to survive (Sommers 2001a, 2001c).¹⁴ Getting and staying there are no easy tasks, and similar assessments of the draw and challenges of cities for youth across war and postwar Africa assume a similar tinge. However, just

as with the youth bulge literature noted in chapter 1, the lion's share of social scientists who write about urban Africa generally highlight statistics and disquieting material conditions.¹⁵ In addition, most of that set of literature fails to incorporate the views of city dwellers themselves, a good deal of whom are youth.

While the social science literature on urban Africa is chock full of narrow understandings of what urban life for youth in Africa is all about, it provides many framing facts and insights, including the following five:

- Urbanization is transforming Africa rapidly. As recently as the early 1990s, “two-thirds of all Africans lived in rural areas.” Half of the continent’s population—759.4 million people—will live in cities by about 2030. By 2050 Africa’s urban population will have surpassed 1.2 billion (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2008: 4).
- Youth are significant contributors to Africa’s urban growth. As Fussell and Greene point out, “Youth and young adults contribute substantially to the flow of migrants from rural to urban areas” (2002: 27). “Rapid urbanization in Africa,” Bocquier, Madise, and Zulu add, “is caused by a high natural increase in urban areas and the influx of mostly young adults migrating [from] rural areas to cities in search of better livelihood opportunities” (2011: 533).
- Violent conflict is among the catastrophes and conditions that drive youth into urban Africa. As Harsch comments, “Drought, environmental degradation, rural poverty and wars continue to push many young villagers toward the [African] cities in search of jobs and other economic and social opportunities” (2001: 3).
- The press of youth and others into war-affected African cities overwhelms urban governments and infrastructures. According to the National Research Council, “in several [African] countries the legacy of long civil wars, together with years of economic mismanagement, has generated massive and rapid population flows into cities and left economies teetering on the verge of collapse” (2003: 101). Economic weakness and huge populations, in turn, have left many in urban Africa “living in abject poverty and in overcrowded housing structures that do not have basic amenities, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, and garbage disposal services” (Bocquier, Madise, and Zulu 2011: 533).
- The gender profile of urban migrants is changing. Many African cities arose during the colonial era, during which time they “were designed

to exclude Africans” (O’Connor 1983; cited in Bryceson 2006: 14). But colonialists required some urban workers, and men fit the bill much more than women. Bryceson notes that since “colonial and municipal governments held firmly to the policy that Africans’ residence in urban areas was temporary,” they designed urban housing for Africans “primarily to accommodate single men who were subjected to highly regimented work and leisure time activities” (16). Akrofi observes that the proportion of females among migrants to African cities is increasing, in part because women have a hard time securing nonfarm work in rural areas, such as being an itinerant laborer or plantation worker. Males usually do that work. As a result, “for women the city is the surest and most available source of employment” (2006: 7). A study of adolescents in low-income sections of Addis Ababa underscores the growing trend of female youth migrating to cities. It found that more adolescent girls (43 percent) than adolescent boys (29 percent) were urban migrants (Erulkar et al. 2004: 7).

Perhaps nothing highlights the divergence between many youth’s and analysts’ perceptions of urban growth than macroeconomics. Applying a macroeconomic lens to Africa’s urbanization makes one thing quite clear: the present era is a terrible time to urbanize. “The essential feature of current Africa urbanization,” the National Research Council pronounces, is that “African cities are economically marginalized in the new global economy” (2003: 101–102). Indeed, as Kessides notes, “African urbanization is taking place in a context of severe constraints that did not face other country groups in other periods—such as full exposure to pressures of global competition; very limited outlets for external migration; and depredation of the productive workforce and of family security due to HIV/AIDS, which also drains the weak capacity of local administrations” (2005: ix). Why, then, do so many young Africans decide to migrate to cities? The logic—economic or otherwise—is hard to make out. As a veteran urban observer sums up the situation, “African urban populations have expanded in the absence of industrialization and national economic growth” (Bryceson 2006: 3). From this perspective, Africa’s urbanization is an anomaly because urban areas lack the sort of industrial base that allowed cities in other regions and eras to boom and thrive.¹⁶ The spiral of economic difficulty is a real concern, and many urban experts highlight it. Adepoju, for example, voices concern about today’s sub-Saharan Africa, where rapid population growth, an expanding

labor force, and descending agricultural productivity have conspired to create a “rural exodus to large cities [that] has outpaced urban economies which are too weak to absorb large numbers of new workers, resulting in further poverty and unemployment” (2007: 13).

Two publications by economists, one by Michael Todaro in 1969 and another by John R. Harris and Todaro in 1970, created what has become known as the Harris-Todaro model. The model posits an economic calculus that informs the decision to migrate from rural to urban areas, even in times of economic stress.¹⁷ It features the assumption that rural–urban migration “can coexist with high urban unemployment as long as the expected urban income is greater than rural income” (Asfaha and Jooste 2006: 90). As Todaro himself noted many years later, “this model postulates that migration proceeds in response to urban–rural differences in expected income rather than actual earnings” (1997: 31).¹⁸

This strictly economic take on migration is necessarily incomplete. Sometimes it may even be beside the point. Indeed, a common reason for migrating to cities is to get away from the controls and expectations that tradition and the older generation lay on young people. This issue is tied to a broader, more encompassing idea, one that bounds well beyond the focus on economic reckonings in the Harris-Todaro model: the freedom that urban life promises. McGovern illuminates this issue in his exploration into why migrants from countries neighboring Côte d’Ivoire would remain in the capital city, Abidjan, in the midst of civil war:

The [reason] that people move to the biggest city around in any part of the world—[is] freedom. That freedom takes many forms. It is the freedom from the claims family members place on their successful members back home, or the freedom from certain social and religious constraints. It is also the freedom of the city—the anonymity, the possibility of reinventing oneself, an encompassing possibility of social [license].

These freedoms are perhaps most attractive to young people—those old enough to make a living for themselves, but not yet constrained by the responsibilities that come with families and children. (2011a: 105–106)

Examining youth in Freetown, Bøås and Hatløy underscore the particular attraction of youth to large cities during and after wars. They start out by stating that people from across Sierra Leone have migrated to Freetown “in search of education, employment, and better opportunities for upwards-social

mobility.” Then they highlight a crucial function of cities during wars: as a haven from the instability and threat in the countryside. “As more and more people became internally displaced” during Sierra Leone’s civil war, “they sought refuge in Freetown” (2005: 25). Regardless of whether it was during or in the aftermath of the conflict, Bøås and Hatløy point out that “for many young people from traditional communities, the cosmopolitan freedom of Freetown is a magnet in itself. The multi-ethnic composition and large population of the city make Freetown a place where one can lose oneself: it is an escape from the rigid social control of the elders and traditional authority in rural communities” (26). De Boeck and Plissart note a similar sentiment—how cities enable youth to shed the constraints of elders and discover a new kind of freedom—for young migrants to Kinshasa. “Despite its miserable conditions,” they observe, “the city often continues to be viewed by rural youngsters as a space of independence and freedom offering an escape from the social control . . . exerted by the village elders” (2004: 192).

A popular means of addressing the streaming of youth into cities is, essentially, not to focus on them at all. The best way to limit the migration tide into cities, a long-standing argument asserts, is to concentrate on rural areas instead. This stance is rooted in history. Bryceson, for example, notes that “Western donor agencies followed in the footsteps of colonial governments in favouring ‘farm first’ policies” (2006: 9). Akrofi highlights the “classical idea” that informs “many donor-sponsored rural development programmes” in Africa: “successful rural development can stem rural-urban migration and thus slow down urban growth.” More recent efforts recognize the interdependence of cities and rural areas by “stimulating” African farmers to favor food production for urbanites over subsistence farming (2006: 7). Min-Harris supports this trend by arguing that African governments “need to provide rural youth with a means to stay in their communities” and not migrate to cities (2009: 162). She also calls agriculture “one of the most promising sectors for rural youth employment” (164).

There is a host of reasons why emphasizing farming to keep youth from leaving for cities is unlikely to succeed. For one thing, such an approach does not consider the freedom and other attractions that cities offer to youth. For another, farmers naturally need to get their crops to markets easily and affordably. To this end, Kessides highlights a crucial point: that “poverty is lower and high-value agriculture [is] more common” in rural areas that are closer to cities (2005: xiv). In war and postwar nations, where infrastructure is inevitably limited, farming far from cities is likely to be much less profitable.



A common sight in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, in 2011: groups of unemployed male youth sitting near major roadways. This group is playing a board game to pass the time.

There are other disincentives, too. Refugees and IDPs who lived in camps during wars are unlikely to return to villages that lack services—such as schools, health clinics, and easy access to water—to which they had become accustomed during wars. Building secondary and vocational schools in the countryside to keep youth there may ultimately backfire and accelerate urban flight. The reason is simple: the best place to find work that requires degrees and certificates is a city, usually the capital city. It is a natural destination for graduates. Besides, secondary and vocational school graduates who farm are typically looked upon as failures in Africa. Such people should never farm themselves (though they can hire others to do so if they can afford it).

One final reason helps explain why investing in farming is so problematic. In many parts of war-affected Africa, farming is viewed as work that should be avoided if at all possible. In Rwanda, youth refer to farming as an elemental act: “digging,” which is what rural people do when they have no other way to eke out a living. As a female youth of twenty-one explained, “Some youth go to school, some go for vocational training, and some dig. The unlucky ones dig” (Sommers 2012b: 99). Elders in Sierra Leonean villages related a fundamental postwar challenge to me during interviews: the rapid decline in the number of young people in villages. With so little available labor around,

they despaired that many prewar farm fields were unused and overgrown. Similar situations can be found in pastoralist communities. Stites and Akabwai, for example, found that that ethnic Karamajong who had migrated into urban areas in Uganda had mainly relied on livestock in Karamoja, a volatile area renowned for violent cattle raiding. Many highlighted “several years of hardship due to drought and insecurity.” Some stated that specific trigger events, like a large raid on their herds or the death of a family member, drove them into urban areas (2012: 6). Others merely stated that “they had grown tired of repetitive rural hardship after an extended period” (7).

Uvin found a similar but even stronger take on farming in rural Burundi. “Farming is a prison to most Burundians,” Uvin sums up. There, “people desperately want to reduce their dependence on the land. The three big ways for young people to escape poverty are education, [urban] migration, and hard work.” He found that Burundians considered secondary education to be “crucial” because people tended to equate escaping poverty with becoming a *fonctionnaire* (civil servant). Uvin also found that “urban migration is the crucial way by which young people try to make a decent living for themselves and their families; it is a way to prepare the conditions for marriage as well” (2009: 185). Farming or herding in much of Africa, particularly in places where conflict and insecurity threaten everyday life, is hard, hard work. Efforts to find avenues out of such toil, such as by moving into towns and cities, are understandably on the increase. As Uvin remarks, in Burundi “young men and women in the city and in the countryside desire just one thing: to have a steady job” (121). And as African youth know, most jobs are in cities.

Farming and herding in Africa may make sense in macroeconomic terms, particularly since cities do not. But for so many African youth, such reckonings are irrelevant. Cities, in contrast, are nothing if not relevant. They are eventful, they are interesting, and they hold promise. They are also an escape from a rural existence that is often punishing and degrading. When wars arise, cities may represent the best, if not the only, place to go. For many youth, and particularly after wars arise, the logic and draw of cities are overwhelming. The problem comes when a life must be constructed there.

Exclusion, the New No-Man’s-Land, and the Police

Social and economic exclusion is a fundamental problem facing African cities today. Urban populations are overwhelmingly young and most urban residents are forced to live on the margins. The sense of elemental alienation,

isolation, and estrangement is particularly palpable in urban Africa during and after wars, since most of the time city governments are weak, urban infrastructure and services are despairingly awful, and people of all kinds have migrated there—particularly those who were displaced from the countryside, have returned from refugee exile, or were combatants.

While male youth seem to have inundated virtually every African city, the combination of their prodigious numbers and the knowledge that some were fighters frequently infuses war-affected cities with a heightened sense of unease. The result is hardly a pretty picture, as this description of postwar Freetown by Bøås and Hatløy illustrates. Most of the males whom they interviewed “had come to Freetown in search of formal employment and education. Unable to find either they continued to stay at the place where they first entered Freetown. Their lives are difficult: they see very few opportunities, and palm wine and marijuana become their only comfort. As most of them either live alone or with friends, they are also outside of the social control and support of families and communities. The feeling of permanent exclusion and lack of hope for the future that these boys express is immense” (2005: 27).¹⁹ Female youth are present in such cities as well, but as we will see, the comparatively hidden nature of their lives is as much a hindrance to them as their male counterparts’ far more public lives are to them. Ironically, many researchers of war and excluded youth seem to have unintentionally contributed to the hiddenness of the lives of female youth by, essentially, sidelining female youth from their discussions.²⁰ Even though cities, as will be shortly discussed, are in many ways the heartland of alienated, excluded female and male youth in war and postwar Africa (and far beyond), the youth situation that I learned about in rural Liberia in 2005 indicates that there are challenges in rural areas too.

I had been sent there to assess a training program for out-of-school, rural Liberian youth. The exclusive focus on youth in villages was notable because so many youth clearly resided in Monrovia. Indeed, local estimates that surfaced from interviews with government and international agency officials (they were really just guesses: precision was impossible) put the proportion of Liberians residing in Monrovia at somewhere between a third to half of the entire population. Yet the prevailing tendency to focus on rural areas and farming (noted earlier in this chapter) was strong, as illuminated by an emphatic statement from an international donor official. “There are not enough jobs for all youth” in Liberia, the official explained. As a result, “The way forward for them is agriculture, whether they like it or not.”

Whether they like it or not. I arrived in the afternoon in the first village

where I would be learning about the youth program. My meeting with program participants and their local facilitators would not occur until the evening.²¹ With time on my hands, I explored the village alone. Eventually I followed a path into the nearby forest, stopping in a clearing by a small creek. I was no longer alone. There were perhaps a dozen male youth there. Some were clearly high or drunk. As we talked about their lives, a younger boy (maybe age twelve) walked past, carrying a clump of kola nuts on his head. The older fellows teased and laughed at the boy, who begged them to leave him alone. Some picked off some of the nuts. The youngster left the forest in tears.

Sharp, glowering looks from women cooking outside met me upon leaving the forest with the youth and entering the sun and heat on the village outskirts. It turned out to be difficult to get much specific information about the lives and views of such young men during my time there. Some referred to male youth who had fought during the civil war and then returned to the village. But people were evasive about details of their lives since their return. One man who was involved in the youth program, for example, alluded to “those who can endanger the program.” He made it clear that he was speaking about certain male youth. He also referred to a theme that turned out to be strongly felt by virtually all village elders whom I interviewed during that trip: deep concern about youth who “didn’t respect the elders.” He shared with me a saying that was common during the civil war period. The English translation, he said, was “Old man, I respect you. Sit down on the ground.” Forcing a man to sit before a youth meant that “youth are humiliating elders.” Bewilderment about the war was a second common theme that arose during discussions with elders in rural Liberia, including one who asked, “Towns and villages were burnt [by rebel soldiers]—what did towns and villages do to youth?” Perhaps not surprisingly, the program facilitators emphasized respect for elders during the lesson I attended that evening.

It could have been that talking about ex-combatants directly was dangerous. Perhaps people preferred to talk only about youth who were program participants, not those who were not (I was seeking information on both). At any rate, subsequent discussions in other villages I visited (some where the program was active, some where it was not) eventually elicited information about youth who were neither program participants nor participants in the life of the village. In one village, a woman explained that “the [male] youth are too vexed. If they can’t get fast money [to attend a program], they won’t go.” A man added, “Some borrow money to go and drink gin. They avoid

you; they say they don't have time for you. Some smoke marijuana. Others join society."

It was increasingly clear that the prewar ways were receding while the imprint of war, which had ended only two years earlier, was ascendant. A male youth who was a program participant recalled what rebel soldiers did when they entered his village. "Some used slang words," he explained, "like 'You're beneath us' [a reference to elders] or 'You're stupid.' And if you see this bad behavior, you start to follow in their footsteps." The principal of a primary school later explained that "most of the youth now smoke and drink, even if they weren't rebels. They want to act like rebels. These days, they won't listen to their parents." "Everybody's hot," another man explained. "They act like rebels. It's everywhere." Some village elders were hot, too. "What we want in the community is what youth do for us," an exasperated senior elder said to me. One of the elders' biggest complaints was how "these youth" prefer to smoke and drink rather than contribute labor to help meet community objectives. There was even a catchphrase for such (mostly male but also female) youth: rebel behavior youth. "Rebel behavior youth" were those who acted like wartime rebel soldiers—even if they had never been one.

Emulating the conduct of former rebel soldiers as a way to resist and confront confining traditions seems, from a distance, unconstructive if not childish. Yet male and female Liberian youth were undoubtedly making a strong statement that the old ways of obeying elders were in the past. It was also a statement that underscored their weakness and the propensity for many youth, particularly male youth lacking viable life options, to sink into drink and drugs. Despite the brave stand they were taking against the traditional power of elders and other community leaders, "rebel behavior youth" were young people going nowhere fast.

They are not alone. I argue in this book that a great many African youth in war and postwar situations are marginalized and excluded. To demonstrate just how encompassing the category of excluded, marginalized youth really is, I have highlighted the systemic exclusion of the overwhelming majority of young people, in much of Africa and elsewhere, from formal education after primary school. This chapter opened by examining a second major way in which young people are marginalized: by failing to become adults. The subsequent look at sexual violence detailed how rape and other forms of sexual violence can severely undermine prospects for advancement and social acceptance for many female youth. The third section highlighted rationales

that inform the shift to cities by many youth with little chance of gaining adulthood or other forms of social acceptance in rural areas.

I will close this chapter by considering two youth exclusion themes. One illuminates how degrees of exclusion exist within the masses of excluded, marginalized youth in war-affected African states. Some excluded youth in war and postwar Africa, I will argue, are more disadvantaged, desperate, and at risk than other excluded youth. The second considers how urban areas often become places where huge numbers of excluded youth exist in worlds that run parallel to what is thought of as mainstream society. Understanding the parallel worlds of excluded urban youth is essential in part because they challenge accepted notions of who belongs to communities and the social mainstream, as well as which citizens conventional civil society leaders and organizations actually represent. I will return to both of these themes later in the book.

The following extended look at the situation of youth in Burundi illustrates the significance of both themes. To be sure, Burundi's youth benefit from a social atmosphere that is relatively accepting of those who struggle to attain adulthood (as noted earlier in this chapter). Uvin, for example, found a generally upbeat, can-do atmosphere in Burundi. "Talking to ordinary people," he writes, "one is struck by the constant repetition of the themes of hard work, perseverance, good planning and foresight, and, increasingly, innovation and dynamism" (2009: 186). Yet the hardship and exclusion that most young Burundians face is difficult to question. For instance, although most young Burundians may start primary school, many subsequently drop out.²² Youth also endure exceptionally high degrees of poverty and underdevelopment.²³ Field research in 2012 found that many young Burundians face considerable difficulties.²⁴ One is hunger. Soil erosion, limited quantities of land and fertilizer, galloping inflation, and few off-farm work opportunities have reduced the ability of many Burundians to secure enough to eat with regularity. Moreover, the prolonged stasis and uncertainty of preadulthood, a period in which it is unclear when and even whether a male or female youth will ultimately marry, lead some adolescents and older youth toward heavy alcohol and drug consumption. A government official in rural Burundi contended that, in his area, "maybe 90 out of 100 ordinary male youth drink banana beer. Many also smoke marijuana." In addition, he said that "many girls drink banana beer, too, almost as many as boys." It was an assessment that appeared to apply elsewhere in Burundi, too.

In Burundi, adolescents and youth who are orphans, unmarried mothers,

prostitutes, houseboys, drug sellers, and “self-demobilized” former combatants (that is, ex-combatants who never entered a DDR program) are among those who appear to experience greater degrees of social isolation and hardship than other excluded youth. Orphans join the ranks of the exceptionally excluded because they lack parents to provide support and guidance, as well as connection to a family legacy and identity. Although there are no accurate statistics on the number of orphans in Burundi, the figure was universally seen as massive: as one Burundian woman aptly asked, “Where *can’t* you find orphans?” The reason was due, in addition to the death of parents from AIDS and a hugely destructive civil war, to the fact that in Burundi an orphan is defined as anyone who either has lost both parents or has lost their father.²⁵ Orphan children are expected to be supported by relatives, usually aunts and uncles. Burundian government and nongovernment agency officials, as well as ordinary adults and youth, all reported that when this happens, orphan children and youth can lose the property they should rightly inherit. The most serious kind of theft involves stolen land. As family land provides male youth with a place to build a house, marry and establish their new family, and provide an inheritance for their sons, its loss falls particularly heavily on them. An orphan boy of fifteen summed up his situation in the following fashion: “My parents died when I was very young. Then my relatives took my land.” Bereft of inherited family land, he felt a strong need to become a father, “because all of my family has perished. I need children to make sure that the name of my family remains.”

Many young female orphans face the more immediate threat of rape and sexual exploitation. When orphan girls move in with uncles who are not related by blood (that is, when the girl’s blood relation is her aunt instead), then it is reportedly not at all surprising if the uncle has sex with her. Indeed, the opposite may be the case. As a Burundian woman working with an NGO stated, “It’s expected that the uncle will sleep with the orphan girl.” Any sign of such an interaction may lead her aunt to chase the orphan girl from the house. Even when this does not occur, orphan children are known to be abused and exploited by relatives. A lack of food and school funds may force them to leave school and then, eventually, a relative’s house. Orphan girls and female youth on their own are thought to be unusually vulnerable to rape because, in the view of a government official, “there are no consequences.” The official explained that, since orphans “have no family,” their rapists are much less likely to be prosecuted.

By all accounts, many orphan adolescent girls and female youth are mem-

bers of a large and startlingly significant population in Burundi: unmarried mothers. In traditional Burundi, an unmarried mother is so beyond the cultural pale that no term exists in Kirundi to describe her. A veteran Burundian NGO official dialed in directly about the cultural curse that unmarried mothers bear, eliciting a view that the research found to be widely held. "In our tradition" in Burundi, the official explained, "an unmarried mother with a child would be killed. That happened maybe fifty years ago." More recently, although the unmarried mother will not be killed, "she will lose all her chances of getting married. In some traditional families, parents will chase her." Being chased or "banned" was reported to be a likely scenario, even though many parents related that they accepted their daughters and the child or children they bore.

Nevertheless, the taboo against unmarried mothers was so strong that some pregnant girls and youth were thought to carry out infanticide against their newborns or to try to abort the pregnancy. As these are secret and desperate measures, it was difficult to gather hard evidence of either. Even so, some of those I interviewed shared their views. Concerning infanticide, for instance, one man explained that "sometimes the unmarried girls give birth and put their babies down the latrine. Others give birth and kill the child right away. They do this because they have shamed their families." The frequency of infanticide may be higher than is assumed: an international agency official researching this issue uncovered evidence suggesting that the Burundian police are underreporting infanticide. The official related that most involved "mothers between 16 and 24 killing their babies."

More people shared information on abortions. Several adult men and women stated that the plant that is used to end the pregnancy can sometimes kill the pregnant woman, too. Attempted abortions appeared to be more likely if the girl or youth was a secondary school student. By the time she had reached secondary school, the family investment in her education was huge. Many adults and government officials said that Burundian families normally anticipate a return on that investment in the form of money sent home by their daughter, who would be expected to secure a salaried job following secondary school graduation. Shame is thought to haunt all unmarried mothers. But if she is in secondary school and pregnancy forces her to leave, the public disgrace she would bring to herself and her family would be still greater.

Ordinary Burundian citizens and government and nongovernment agency officials collectively shared a host of reasons why there were so many un-

married mothers in Burundi today. One factor lay with what appears to be a very low likelihood, in rural Burundi, that couples would use condoms during sexual intercourse. This is because condom use is jointly and powerfully disparaged in Burundian culture and by religious leaders. Thought to be a significant sin, condom use seems to be regularly and recurrently condemned in Sunday church sermons. One Catholic man, for example, noted how “priests talk about not using condoms all the time.” Premarital abstinence is preached and vigorously urged instead. One problem with this avenue of action is, of course, that youth marry late or not at all. Many Burundian adults and youth whom I interviewed insisted that there were far more females than males in the population, which routinely left some female youth unable to marry. While official statistics merely point to slightly more females than males in Burundi, it was evident that if female youth become mothers when they are single, their chances of getting married dwindle.²⁶ This seemed to be particularly the case in rural Burundi.

A second important reason for the profusion of unmarried mothers in Burundi is transactional sex. It occurs because so many girls and female youth are hungry, poor, and hoping to marry. Desperate girls and female youth reportedly exchange unprotected sexual intercourse for a plate of food, a beer, or perhaps a bar of soap. Soap surfaced as a high female youth priority, since cleanliness, together with regularly using body oil, was thought to help attract potential husbands. A common way that adults and youth characterized such interactions was that men “trick” girls and female youth to secure sex. One father said that premarital pregnancy is merely “a question of being tricky. When a girl is hungry, she will agree to everything you tell her. If you give her a biscuit and some *ugali* [stiff porridge], she will go with a man” to have sex. Some male youth openly stated that they deceive unmarried girls, too. One male youth, aged twenty-four, explained how he and his male youth colleagues “never rape girls here because most of the time, when you try to trick girls [to get sex], it works.”

Rape is a third reason that single girls and female youth become mothers. Interviews in Burundi with government and nongovernmental agency officials, as well as adults and youth, strongly suggested that rape of unmarried girls and female youth was both prevalent and unexceptional. Just how many young females are raped proved impossible to ascertain. No one disputed, for instance, that some teachers have sex with girl students. Some education officials explained that this sex can be transactional: reportedly (and this is only based on reports), some girls may be able to remain in secondary school

provided they have sex with teachers and/or their school director. Coercion appears to be a big part of the mix for girls and female youth both in and not in school. Several Burundians, together with a researcher examining political violence in Burundi, related that it would be very difficult to refuse sex to members of the Imbonerakure youth wing of Burundi's CNDD-FDD ruling party, who are present in many rural and urban communities across Burundi.²⁷ They are thought to be that powerful. The apparent commonality of coercive sex in Burundi, in fact, raises the question of how rape and sexual violence are locally defined. Conversations with government officials, for example, strongly suggested that the authorities can follow up on a rape allegation only if the accuser is already pregnant, since her pregnancy becomes evidence that rape may have occurred. Sexual violence seems even harder to define, although one government official and several Burundian adults brought forth one definition: whenever a girl in secondary school becomes pregnant. The research in Burundi indicated that rapists are rarely prosecuted and coercive sex is widespread.

Regardless of how they became pregnant, unmarried mothers have entered into a life of public shame, embarrassment, and social isolation. The situation facing unmarried mothers only worsens because the fathers of their children rarely come forward. If they did, the fathers would be expected to provide for the mother and child. Most cannot. If the fathers are already married to other women, they may prefer to hide the illicit nature of their fathering even if they could support their new family. It also was unclear exactly what became of unmarried mothers who were chased from their family homes. Only one occupation and destination surfaced during interviews: becoming prostitutes in a city. Yet even those who remained with their families faced additional difficulties, particularly if the child was a boy. The reason is that, if the boy's father has not made himself known, then the son would be in line to inherit family land. With poverty pervasive and land extremely scarce, the sons of unmarried mothers can expect to face ridicule and worse from their uncles. A twenty-year-old male youth detailed the situation in the following way: "If an unmarried girl has a son, she brings trouble into her family. You don't have enough food: now there's another one who needs to eat. That's the first problem. The second problem is about land. When the boy grows up [and his father never comes forward], he can inherit [some of the family] land." Life is not going to be easy for the boy. He is likely to be treated harshly. I heard many stories of uncles permanently driving nephews whose mothers were unmarried out of the house.

If unusually excluded rural youth—such as orphans, unmarried mothers, and their sons—are driven from home, their likeliest destination, together with so many other young Burundians, is a city. Among the reasons youth head there is the anonymity that life promises them as a new migrant, as it allows urban newcomers the chance to shed the discomforts and expectations that burdened their rural lives. It is also a location where many young people run in place: the chance of becoming an adult, as rural-based tradition demands, may be entirely out of reach. As an orphan male youth of twenty-five in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital city, emphatically stated, "I have no chance to marry, no way, ever." It proved to be a common young male perspective on life in Burundi's sprawling capital: getting enough money to provide for a wife and then children struck many male youth whom I interviewed as far beyond the realm of possibility. Female youth may have few or no opportunities to marry as well. The focus, in so many cases, is instead on survival or stability: one of the most compelling trends arising from research with urban youth in many war and postwar African cities is the pronounced focus on money. Without money, finding a plate of food, soap and water to clean one's body and clothes, or a safe resting place at night may be unattainable. The ever-expanding neighborhoods of Bujumbura are strewn with litter and nooks where young people sleep outside, sometimes beside the plastic bottles they use to sniff glue. Street kids are vivid and ubiquitous reminders of what can happen if somehow securing money remains beyond reach.

Bujumbura, like many African cities, is a predatory place. While neighborhood streets can be fairly relaxed by day, most have no streetlights and are pitch-black or nearly so at night. Well-armed gangs, many of whom are former combatants, are known to loot and rape. Bujumbura is also stimulating. Five hundred francs (US\$0.33) can get you into a video parlor to watch an action film, the latest football match, or some porn. Youth in cities are the first to learn the latest slang and hear the hottest songs. A common theme of urban hip-hop songs is the difficulty of everyday life. Perullo, for instance, observes that "rap songs about social conditions are often far grimmer than political commentary, since they add personal narratives that explore the harsher realities of living in urban Africa" (2005: 86). An example of this is "Maisha" (meaning "life" in Kiswahili), by Bujumbura's Fariouz:

What kind of jobs, my man?
Jobs with lots of shame, bad luck and risk,
To earn nothing at the end.

But when you're hungry with nothing to wear,
 You do it, man.
 Sometimes we smoke ganja [marijuana].
 Why do you think we smoke it, man?
 We just try to forget, man.
 Shame, sorrows, tears, fears, bluemen [policemen] and pain,
 All the time, all the time . . .
 We have no plan,
 Find your meal, then you're a champion.²⁸

Cities can also flip old realities, often in surprising ways. The situation of prostitutes in postwar Bujumbura provides a compelling example of this. Just to the north, in the postwar and postgenocide Rwandan capital of Kigali, prostitutes live in desperate conditions, earning a pittance and rarely, if ever, using condoms. They share their fundamental fatalism about getting HIV/AIDS with male customers (Sommers 2012b). In Kigali, prostitutes make as little as US\$0.18 for sex with a condom, and perhaps US\$0.37 more for sex without one (178). One might have expected a similar state of affairs for Burundian female youth in Bujumbura, in a nation that is even poorer than Rwanda. The reverse was the case. There, prostitution was a popular profession. Field research in the Bujumbura neighborhood of Bwiza suggested that prostitution was the most potentially lucrative job an adolescent girl or female youth could find. A female youth of eighteen, for example, compared her prior job as a waitress (in which she made 60,000 francs [US\$39.87] a month) to the prostitution profession. "Working at night," she explained, allowed her to make "20,000 [US\$13.89], 30,000 [US\$19.93], or even 50,000 francs [US\$33.22] in one night." Prostitution can be so profitable that several prostitutes mentioned that they had housegirls who worked for them (mainly to care for their children when they worked). Such a scenario was inconceivable for prostitutes in Kigali, where most were barely getting by.

The dramatic contrast in the lives and earning potential of prostitutes in Burundi and Rwanda is likely due, at least in part, to the sharp divergence in how the two societies judge youth who do not or cannot conform to cultural expectations. As noted earlier in this chapter, there is a far greater tendency for society to accept male youth who struggle and fail to attain manhood in Burundi than in Rwanda. While prostitution in rural Burundi was seen as shameful, it was, in the words of one prostitute, considered "ordinary work" in the capital city. No one in Bwiza challenged that assessment. The perception of prostitution as a conventional urban occupation appeared to

provide many in the profession with a measure of economic leverage that their Kigali counterparts, burdened by their status as social pariahs, had no chance of attaining. Moreover, Bujumbura prostitutes were in considerable demand, since visiting one appeared to be a common means for men to secure sex in the city. In rural Burundi, where prostitution was hotly condemned and money was scarce, “tricking” girls proved a common way for male youth and men to have sex with females. Not so in Bujumbura, where going to a prostitute was more prevalent. One prostitute clearly explained this urban preference: “Finding a girl to have sex with without paying will take a long time. If she’s not a prostitute, you have to trick her: you have to pretend that you love her and share food and drinks with her. But you need to be patient and wait to ask her for sex. She may say no. Meanwhile, with a prostitute, you pay money and have sex. So it’s more popular.”

A second striking difference from sexual relations in rural Burundi—and Kigali—was the fact that many prostitutes in Bujumbura used condoms. This was clearly not always the case—there were many reports, for example, of how poor prostitutes would accept more money to have sex without a condom (the dangers facing young prostitutes are examined below). On the other hand, one prostitute explained that a proactive interest in safe sex was so strong among some prostitutes that they “can’t agree [to have sex without a condom] even if the man offers 100,000 francs.” The reference to 100,000 francs (US\$66.44)—a truly significant amount of money for nearly all Burundians—dramatized just how important safe sex and avoiding HIV/AIDS was to what appeared to be a significant proportion of Bujumbura prostitutes. The mind-set could not have been more different from that of Kigali prostitutes, who endured social condemnation and shared a despondence about life with many of their customers.

A further contrast to Kigali was how some prostitutes in Bujumbura reportedly viewed their work as an act of empowerment. To begin with, being a prostitute, many men and women reported, did not prevent a woman from having a boyfriend. “The boyfriends don’t care if their girlfriends are prostitutes,” one prostitute explained, “because she comes home with money.” But much more significantly, another prostitute explained how her profession can improve a woman’s marriage prospects. “You can wait for a husband at home,” she explained. Yet even if you succeed in finding a man to marry you, “you won’t find the kind of man you want to marry.” Just as they insist on using condoms with customers, some prostitutes “are selective: they have a clear profile of who they want to marry. She will charge for the sex, but she also hopes that at some point the man will fall in love and marry her.” A

popular profile for a husband, she continued, was either “a *mzungu* [white man] or a wealthy Burundian man.” It was not clear how often this plan for moving up in society—gaining a high-status husband and financial security—succeeded. The odds for success would seem to be quite low, and in the interim, it was also possible for adolescent girls and female youth eventually to “get lost in prostitution forever,” as one prostitute put it. After a while, even those determined to vigilantly maintain safe sex and entice a man they sought to marry might be unable to keep such policies going.

The jagged edge between profits and possibility, on the one hand, and descent into danger, on the other, was indeed present in Bujumbura. The perilous trap that prostitution could become threatened adolescent prostitutes in particular. This was because adolescent girls—or any female youth who looked young enough—were in high demand. Girl prostitutes were known as *Mwana Douze Ans*, which translates as “twelve-year-old child,” or, especially, “Toto Show,” which means “child show.”²⁹ An eighteen-year-old female youth who claimed to be a Toto Show defined them as “very young and very fresh, with hot blood. All the men run after them.” A twenty-five-year-old male youth described why Toto Show were such hot commodities: “Most adult men look for Toto Show. The reason is that they have an older woman in their house [that is, their wife]. So they want to have sex with a much younger one. They believe that they can’t get AIDS from her. Toto Show are also cheaper, and you can force them to have sex without a condom.” Male carriers of the AIDS virus reportedly sought out Toto Show in particular. A young prostitute underscored the perverse and utterly misguided belief that having sex with a Toto Show was a way to reduce a man’s AIDS infection. Her analysis strongly suggested that such male customers were unlikely to use condoms: “Men who have AIDS run after Toto Show because they think it will help their health. They think that having sex with her will reduce their level of AIDS infection. Maybe 60 percent of his AIDS will go into the Toto Show, and he’ll only remain with 40 percent.”

The men who seek sex with Toto Show also have a nickname: *Mangema*.³⁰ The word is derived from *manger*, the French verb meaning “to eat.” A group of female youth described the double meaning of the nickname. “We call them *Mangema*,” one seventeen-year-old explained, “because they have something you want to eat, which is money. But when they give you what you want, then they will eat you [that is, have sex with you]. Eat and pay: that’s the relationship between *Mangema* and Toto Show.” The cynical reference to eating reawakens the significance of hunger in rural and urban Burundi, as well as a broader image of men—and not just pedophiles—devouring

girls. Taken together, female prostitutes, and younger ones in particular, face grave and gruesome threats, including rape, becoming pregnant from forced exposure to unsafe sex, and acquiring AIDS. All three results might arrive simultaneously, of course, or over time. Such severe vulnerability that adolescent girls and female youth faced was not limited to prostitutes. Interview data with ordinary citizens and government officials in Burundi pointed to a common privilege of male household heads. If a girl who is unrelated by blood stays in your house—such as an orphan niece from your wife’s family (noted earlier) or a housegirl—you may choose to have sex with her. One such household head in Bujumbura bluntly characterized his prerogative. “If you have a housegirl [in your house] and she’s attractive,” he declared, “you must sleep with her.” With a knowing chuckle, he added, “It’s obligatory!”

Given the elemental vulnerability of Toto Show prostitutes and housegirls, it was clear that sexual predation sat alongside the precaution and control that informed the actions of some prostitutes and their customers. Just why even this limited exception existed in Bujumbura and not Kigali was not immediately apparent. It could have been that a similar degree of caution informed the actions of some Kigali prostitutes whom I did not interview. More likely, however, was a deeper difference that comparative analysis drew out: “Most Burundian youth believe that they have options and possibilities while most Rwandan youth do not” (Sommers and Uvin 2011: 1). Indeed, many Rwandan youth generally seem to have assumed “a philosophy of profound resignation” and a belief that “things are getting worse” (Sommers 2012b: 187, 188). With such an outlook, and despite knowledge of the dangers of HIV/AIDS, condom use for Rwandan prostitutes and their customers evidently seemed beside the point. Living for today, or maybe tomorrow, appeared to make much more sense.³¹

The counterparts to housegirls in Bujumbura are houseboys, and there are far more of them: a veteran houseboy, for example proclaimed that “so many boys are houseboys in town, you can’t count them all.” Indeed, desperately poor male youth migrants from rural Burundi appear to have created a substantial pool of available, and very cheap, labor. Many people have houseboys in Bwiza (and, to a lesser extent, housegirls). Houseboys are expected to perform all of the work duties that housegirls perform—cleaning, washing, cooking, and running errands for their boss—except for child care. In return, houseboys receive food, a place to sleep, and a small monthly salary: the lowest reported salary was 4,000 francs (US\$2.66) and the highest was 20,000 francs (US\$13.29). As with Toto Show and housegirls, desperate youth in town provided others with ample opportunities for exploitation.

A houseboy's monthly salary, for example, could easily descend if he broke a cup or his boss did not view his cooking prowess as satisfactory. There was nothing a houseboy could do, it appeared, except find another houseboy job. Houseboy networks helped members stay abreast of new work opportunities. As one explained, "I learn about new work from other houseboys in the neighborhood. They can tell you about new jobs." It does not seem to take anyone in Bujumbura long to become entrepreneurial: houseboys, for example, charge a "commission," often the first month's salary, in return for finding someone a new job. Being a full- or part-time "commissioner" is a common male youth occupation in Bujumbura.

The accent on entrepreneurial action as a way to get food, pay rent, support one's parents, and lay the groundwork for a better future was powerfully evident in Bujumbura. Some female youth worked as prostitutes on weekends and used the proceeds to cover their secondary school expenses. Houseboys related that they saved money to send to their parents, pay a "commission" for a better job (as a houseboy, or maybe as a street vendor or a bicycle or motorcycle taxi driver), and perhaps even to use, eventually, to return to the countryside and marry. One male orphan youth of twenty-two shared how he rose to become a husband and father in the countryside. After dropping out of school as an adolescent, he worked in town as a houseboy. It took him two years to save all of 20,000 francs (US\$13.29), which he used to buy a female pig. Eventually, he was able to sell baby pigs for 15,000 francs each (US\$9.97), build a simple house, and marry informally (that is, without a formal ceremony). At the time of our 2012 interview, he and his wife had two children.

Still other male youth in Bujumbura sold drugs (heroin, cocaine, marijuana), which many considered an especially profitable job. "Definitely selling drugs is the best way for boys to make money in Bujumbura," one businessman stated. "Boys can't miss making at least 3,000 francs [US\$1.99] a day." Another popular occupation was "working" as a thief. A twenty-two-year-old male youth from the neighborhood of Bwiza shared what proved to be a common attitude about thievery. "Boys in Bwiza need to get money," he succinctly stated. "To get it, we must steal: we are jobless, so we steal." One purpose of stealing was to pay the kickbacks that many in Bujumbura said were needed to secure a salaried position—in the government, in an international or Burundian agency, or in a private company. One male youth, for example, detailed his plan to gather funds to pay the kickback required for a job at the brewery: "I thief." He would steal until he had accumulated

the required amount (equivalent to three months' salary) and then take it to the brewery to get his job.

It is in such an environment, where stealing or selling drugs to get ahead has an entirely viable rationale and houseboys, housegirls, and Toto Show weather violence and exploitation in exchange for a foothold in town, that the parallel world that excluded urban youth dominate comes into view. Building on freedom and escape from cultural containments in rural Africa (noted earlier in this chapter), cities are about fashioning a new way of life to make do or somehow get ahead. Government corruption and police predations are part of this world, since citizens can easily be exploited and nothing can be done in response—if a government official demands a bribe or a policeman robs you, where can you go to report it? Officials' demands for bribes, within limits, may even be reasonable, something even the sculpting tenets of strict religious belief may have to allow. A Pentecostal pastor in Dar es Salaam, for example, related that "in moral terms, taking bribes in the cause of survival was not a sin. God would understand" (Sommers 2001a: 176). But what is legal is essentially ephemeral in cities, since virtually everywhere one lives and everything one does to make ends meet is, technically, illegal. Sprawling informal housing and enveloping informal markets rule the roost.

Big African cities are social and cultural sponges, incorporating ethnicities, musical heritages, languages, impunity, and ways of life, evaporating accepted moralities, and evolving new ways of thinking and doing. It is just this sort of amorphous, urban "no man's land" that Guyer and others celebrate (2011: 474). Reviewing ethnographies of different African cities, Guyer's take imbues life in urban Africa with otherworldly imagery. "In the ether of the invisible," she writes, "what circulates are symbols and expressions; what emanates from bodies is sexual tension, aesthetic sensibility and physical vulnerability; what bears down oppressively is constraint and neglect of all kinds" (475). The organic froth that convulses many observers of African cities (noted in chapter 1) is here replaced by a different conception: hardship as part of the urban life mix. This is hard to square with descriptions of, for example, the difficulties and depredations that Toto Show experience. But what Guyer and others describe (such as de Boeck and Plissart's depiction of massive Kinshasa as an "invisible city" [2004]) is hardship in the context of invention, newness, and adventure, at the center of which are its dominant residents: youth.

In sheer numbers alone, Africa's urban youth constitute the main protagonists of urban dramas and are the primary shapers of urban culture. They also powerfully assert, in many ways, their outcast majority status. The

linguists Kiessling and Mous intimate as much in their consideration of urban youth languages in Africa: “For urban youth, identification is achieved through distancing themselves from the older generations, from the rural population that tends to live in a more traditional way of life, and from the upper social classes or, generally speaking, from the rest of society” (2004: 312–313). The African urban youth “antilanguages” express an “antisociety identity” that has criminal, slang vocabulary. Using the local antilanguage gives youth a kind of “covert prestige” (313). Urban youth music can have a strong hold over young urbanites. The music’s themes tend to celebrate an alienated underdog identity, and local musicians often sing or rap in the local youth antilanguage.

The parallel popularity of foreign musicians in urban Africa promotes the sense that feelings of oppression and injustice extend to alienated young people across the globe. An enduring international figure is the late reggae master Bob Marley, whose “voice talks back to power, exploitation and indifference with all the insolent style and complex rhetoric of a rebel captured in the process of becoming a revolutionary” (Gilroy 2005: 226). While Marley’s image was that of a spiritual radical, another unusually popular musician in African war zones and on city streets has been the American hip-hop maestro Tupac Shakur (widely known as 2Pac).³² In stark contrast to Marley, 2Pac’s lyrics were personalized, and he rapped with tremendous intensity. His music “was an unconventional concoction, a noble marriage of criminality, black rage and black nationalism.” In his songs, 2Pac challenged “racial oppression through self-combustion, gun violence, and passionate disclosure of the inner-city blues” (Reeves 2008: 159). A second influential American hip-hop artist is 50 Cent, who reportedly has been particularly popular with gangs in postwar Juba, especially his song and film entitled “Get Rich or Die Tryin’.” In the view of one South Sudanese researcher, 50 Cent’s ethos and message tell gang members to “go and rob: to be rich like 50 Cent and the others and have that nigga lifestyle.” In South Sudan, “nigga” is a local term for rebellious male youth who identify with what the researcher called “American nigga [hip-hop] groups” (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 11). Martin and Mosel note that many gangs in urban South Sudan “are influenced by the music and dress adopted by [hip-hop] stars such as 2Pac and 50 [Cent]” (2011: 31).

McGovern’s depiction of popular music in war-torn Abidjan captures how new rationales for what might be seen as criminal behavior also emanate from the songs of local musicians. He found that the Ivorian Coupé Décalé

style of music, which “makes reference to a morally ambiguous world in which success is measured by making easy money, often by dubious and illegal means,” was the “soundtrack” of the civil conflict era (2011a: 106). Regardless of its source, it is hardly surprising that music expressing moral ambiguity emerges from times of war, when bloodshed, atrocity, loss, and displacement dominate many lives and rule of law is mostly an idea. Life may not seem fair or just because it isn’t. Such mind-sets about life appear to resonate particularly strongly in African cities embroiled in or surfacing after wars. The distinction, to be sure, is a matter of degree, since most sub-Saharan African nations host refugees from wars, with many residing in their teeming capital cities.³³ In addition, urban youth in many countries that have not been engulfed in war indisputably share some of the same characteristics and experiences with their counterparts in war and postwar states. There will likely be, for example, evidence of creativity and reinvention as well as weak governance, impunity, injustice, unemployment, violence, and abuse from police and security forces.

Yet most war and postwar cities more than likely differ from cities in nations that have not directly experienced war in three important ways. First, there is the context of urban violence and peace building. War-torn countries with troops on the ground can stimulate unusually high degrees of tension, violence, and impunity in urban areas—even when the fighting is far from cities. Second, as noted earlier in this chapter, wars can fuel huge increases in urban populations—for many civilians, it seems safer to be in a city than to live exposed to incursions in rural areas.³⁴ Finally, war-affected cities normally host substantial numbers of former fighters. Their presence alone can ratchet up tensions in cities. The reasons have much to do with anger and, in my experience, a strong sense among the former fighters that the abilities that they honed and that were celebrated during wars are no longer useful. Now in cities, their abilities to command others in battle, spy behind enemy lines, provide for a wife (or set of wives) and children, and generally receive recognition for masculine prowess are all diminished. Their wives and children may live elsewhere, replaced with, almost always, seething resentment and anger. The paradox, arising from the fact that their former commanders simultaneously exploited them “while recognizing a degree of potential and capability in them that no one else seems to see” (Sommers 2012a: 3–4), may leave them with a terrible realization: that their heyday, as a fifteen- or twenty- or twenty-five-year-old fighter, has already passed them by. Ex-combatants often carry the sting of pronounced exclusion: why

would anyone hire a former combatant? Beyond work in security, jobs may be very hard to find. Indeed, former combatants may strike other civilians as dangerous outsiders and former killers.

Former combatants normally divide into two groups. By far the best known are those who were formally demobilized and went through a DDR program, normally receiving recognition, support, and perhaps even some job training or education after leaving their military careers behind and becoming civilians again. Many such graduates end up in cities. Kunkeler and Peters, for example, note that about half of former combatants in Sierra Leone received vocational training. When the six-to-nine-month training did not result in a job, many trainees sold the DDR toolkit they had received (which is usually tools to get them started in their trade of choice, such as carpentry). They then “drifted” either to areas with diamond mines or to urban centers (2011: 282).

The second group of former soldiers constitutes what are known as the “self-demobilized”—those who never entered any DDR program. Such ex-combatants tend to be a particularly indignant bunch. As Uvin found in Bujumbura,

The self-demobilized did not receive support from anyone, except their families. This situation they by and large share with their fellow urban youth, which is also not supported by any agency whatsoever. However, they did spend much of their youth fighting and suffering extraordinarily, and this makes them extremely bitter. They are as a group . . . feeling more excluded, more depressed, more hopeless than any other urban group we talked to—and that is saying a lot, as the level of hopelessness and depression was higher in urban areas than in rural ones. They are also angry—actually, it seems their anger is their defining identity feature. (2007: 17)

Within a group that is already unusually excluded—ex-combatants—Uvin highlights that the self-demobilized may be more excluded than others. It is not coincidental that Bujumbura’s armed gangs were known for rape and robbery—and were thought to be composed of former combatants. How many of the gang members were formally demobilized or self-demobilized could not be determined.

Gangs may or may not feature ex-combatants—in Bujumbura they reportedly did; in Juba they evidently did not. The gang members in Juba were thought to include both elite and desperately poor male youth. While difficult to confirm, some combination of “rich boys who have vehicles,

weapons and connections” and “poor youth [who] use pangas and razor blades” seemed to be in force (Martin and Mosel 2011: 31). Field research in 2011 also pointed to a constellation of players featuring gang leaders who had direct ties to government officials (to ensure impunity), together with male orphans often serving as foot soldiers (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 11). Martin and Mosel also noted that “both men and women join” gangs and that some of the gangs allegedly have direct connections to “influential individuals within the military and police force and lie behind much of the organised crime in Juba” (2011: 31).

Two crucial issues about the makeup and purpose of urban youth gangs surface in Martin and Mosel’s analysis. They note that gangs are mainly composed of “young men from marginalised communities” who “join gangs as a form of extended family and as a mechanism to provide economic and social values not found in mainstream society” (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2007, cited in Martin and Mosel 2011: 31). Young men who “have lost touch with their families and rural support networks,” moreover, use “gangs or armed groups” to provide “camaraderie and support as an alternative to a family unit” (Stavrou, Stewart, and Stavrou 2000, cited in Martin and Mosel 2011: 31). Thus gangs “cannot simply be explained in resource terms, nor as a manifestation of anti-social behaviour and a security threat” (Martin and Mosel 2011: 31). Gangs, in other words, serve important functions for some members—most of them male—in the parallel urban world of excluded youth. But they are only members of a much larger excluded urban youth society. McGovern shares his sense of the main protagonists in war-affected Abidjan: “The young people out in the street in Abidjan since the conflict” are mostly men between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five who “share the radically diminished prospects of many young West African city dwellers and the resulting anger” (2011a: 112). Just to the West, in postwar Monrovia, Hoffman shares something quite similar: male youth of many backgrounds—former students, soldiers, manual laborers, prisoners, and so on—mixing together in urban neighborhoods and collectively suggesting that “life in the city” was “an impossibility. There is no social category that signifies or guarantees stable habitation, and everyone is potentially on the market” (2011: 188–189). Drawing from field research in Freetown, Utas finds that “street life is a fragile form of survival, and death is ever-present. But there is also a social form of death—the feeling of having no social worth, being devoid of social value” (2012: 2). In Freetown, Monrovia, Abidjan, and other war-affected African cities, many

youth experience lives that are in flux, facing uncertain future prospects and living without much hope.³⁵

There is a gaping hole in these analyses of ex-combatants, gangs, and other youth on the streets. Most youth scholarship is about male youth. The accent on males seems to be even more pronounced in studies of cities. Indeed, female youth rarely surface in accounts of excluded urban youth in war and postwar Africa (Coulter's [2009] discussion of the "boyfriend business" of female youth in Freetown being one exception). Utas's analysis of urban youth in West Africa provides one explanation for the pronounced attention paid to male and not female youth in cities. He does this in an interesting way: by drawing his definition of youth entirely from local culture. Accordingly, most female youth simply evaporate from the conversation: "In West Africa, people fitting the emic category of youth [that is, those considered youth according to local, cultural definitions] are predominantly male and a large portion are over 25 years of age. Approximately 80% of those labeled youth in Freetown are male" (2012: 2).

While effectively pushing females from the youth limelight may draw from African cultural norms, another common African cultural component is the subordination of females. Drawing from research on girls and female youth who were part of fighting forces in three African societies that have been seriously affected by war (Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Mozambique), McKay and Mazurana highlight the fact that "within strongly patriarchal societies . . . girls and women are oppressed in countless ways." The authors found that "girls' experiences within fighting forces are made more severe because of sexism and misogyny. . . . Girls work far more hours than boys, have lower literacy rates than boys and suffer preventable deaths because they lack reproductive health care." Girls also may suffer "sexual exploitation and abuse in their communities by boys and men" and may be pressured by their parents "to exchange sex for goods and money" or marry men "who have raped and abused them" (2004: 17). Still others may have been abducted and taken to other countries to serve as forced laborers (e.g., Nordstrom 1999 on Mozambique). In war-affected cities across Africa, urban female youth are present in significant numbers, as students, former members of fighting forces, small-time entrepreneurs, market vendors, and much more: the prior discussion of prostitutes and housegirls in Bujumbura details two of many urban female youth occupations in Burundi. Although some female youth are married or do not have children, a common urban female youth profile is that of the unmarried mother.



In the city of Kenema, in postwar Sierra Leone in 2010, an unmarried mother works in her outdoor hair salon, plaiting hair while caring for her daughter.

Five pervasive themes flow from this discussion of youth exclusion. One is that sexual violence threatens the lives of a great many female youth. Detailed considerations of female youth in Sierra Leone and Burundi in this chapter, underscored by the findings of Nordstrom and McKay and Mazurana just above, point to a profusion of transactional and coerced sex, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, in the shadow of wars. Poverty, impunity, alarmingly low levels of protection, and a widespread inability for male and female youth to marry and gain acceptance as adults are among the array of causes for this situation. Another is precedent: threats related to predatory sex seem to increase in contexts where sexual violence is a featured component of war. This is the case for most if not all recent African conflicts. For example, in Burundi, “sexual violence is really widespread,” a veteran researcher of youth in the nation explained. As a result, “young women are trying to protect themselves.” One way to do this is to “look smart—with clean clothing and braided hair. Even if you have little money, young women have to try to show that they have family members who care for them”—even when they don’t. In other words, “looking smart” announces that “if someone violates me, there will be repercussions” from relatives. The threat of rape can be so great that many girls and young women “never go to the bathroom

alone. Otherwise, they'll be violated." Hoofnagle and Rothe support this assessment with the comment that women in Burundi "retain a position more closely aligned with property," with the result that raping a woman "is akin to taking or vandalizing a man's property without any real fear of reprisal or legal punishment" (2010: 184). The transmutation of adolescent girls, female youth, and women into property and the virtual impunity that can fuel the incidence of sexual violence signify a disturbing trend: that the protection concerns of female youth are significant in many war and postwar contexts yet are too often overlooked and underaddressed. A related trend that is also both troubling and discounted is what may be substantial levels of pedophilia in war and postwar environments. Evidence in Kinshasa (de Boeck and Plissart 2004: 167) and the strong popularity of Bujumbura's Toto Show prostitutes both point in this direction.

A second pervasive theme is drugs and alcohol. The two are part of both the foreground and the background of stories of female and especially male youth in rural and urban settings across war-affected Africa. There are at least three dimensions to this concern. The first is that youth without direction often turn to drinking and taking drugs, a phenomenon as common across Burundi as in many other nations. A second component is that alcohol and drug use may have been central to soldier lives in war zones. De Boeck and Plissart assert that "street children, like child soldiers, state, 'When you smoke cannabis it gives you "thirty-six rages" [it makes you very angry], and it turns you into a war machine'" (2004: 166). It is the sort of comment that resonates powerfully with research on fighters and other youth in Sierra Leone (e.g., Coulter 2009). A third dimension concerns "the rise in local [drug] consumption in Africa [that] closely parallels rapid growth of population and the spread of urbanization" (Affinnih 2002: 277). It turns out that drug use in African cities is but one component of vibrant and growing "global *narcoscapes*" that "operate within the same global capitalist system" (265; emphasis in original): "In addition to unemployment and the dissolution of traditional relationships, urbanization brings large numbers of African citizens in contact with the international drug organizations that use cities as transshipment points and provides an enormous opportunity for illegitimate economic activities such as drug trafficking, drug peddling, prostitution, and crime" (277). As evidenced by Bujumbura's many drug peddlers, the dominance of illicit commerce and sources of employment helps evolve local definitions of what are commonly accepted and practiced kinds of work.

Third, excluded youth communities are reasonably inclusive. Examples of these parallel worlds of alienated young people are abundant. The inclusive nature of these groups of excluded young people is illuminated by the gangs of Juba and the “rebel behavior” youth of Liberia, both of which comprise female and male youth.

Another example concerns urban male youth in Freetown, which Utas states is flooded with street-corner social clubs that are fundamentally inclusive and supportive. The one he studied in detail, Pentagon, included “fighters from all fighting factions during the war” who blended and worked together. The Pentagon members barely kept their heads above water, and in any way that was necessary: “Pentagon is about survival work, but also survival crime. And it is obvious that the two are not easily separated in practice. A central tenet for Pentagon is social security. Pentagon is a social safety net, a gathering of poor people helping each other because they know their state has neither the capacity nor the will to do so” (2012: 2). Utas then mentions a theme in the lives of excluded youth, and excluded urban youth in particular, that has somehow failed to gain much traction in the world of policy and practice: the damningly negative and expansive imprint of police forces. As Utas observes, “If you are ill the social club [in this case, other Pentagon members] will assist you, and if you are arrested by the police—an all too frequent occurrence in Freetown—they will also assist you. . . . People on the street do not see [the police] as a force for good but rather as a force of looters from whom they need protection” (2). What might seem a perversion of justice and the rule of law by outsiders is really, just as Utas suggests, a grasping, threatening presence in everyday life. To be sure, ideas of legality and morality more or less fly out the window in the parallel worlds of excluded urban youth. They are replaced by efforts to survive and attempts to advance, which are frequently embodied in urban youth antilanguages. In Freetown, for example, the verb *dreg* means “to hustle, moving from point to point around the city and across the boundaries of legality . . . a beg, borrow, or steal existence that is the fate of ex-combatants from all factions” (Hoffman 2011: 145–146)—and also, no doubt, the fate of many others in Freetown and elsewhere, including Bujumbura’s many young “commissioners.” You do, in short, whatever it takes to get by or move up.

The police are a power all their own, and their power constitutes the fourth prevalent theme emerging from this consideration of youth exclusion. In virtually every war and postwar African context, it seems that the police can harass, intimidate, threaten, loot, extort, collude, and partake in varieties of

violence with airtight impunity. This is not just the case in war-affected nations, of course: police harassment of male youth, to name just one example of their interactions with youth, is as common in Nairobi (e.g., World Bank 2010: 224) as it is in Kinshasa (e.g., Geenen 2009: 363). Crucially, the police commit illegal acts as local, on-the-street (and footpath) representatives of the national government. Research in Bujumbura revealed that the police were widely believed to be extortionists. “We all know how the police operate here—they are after money,” a Burundian businessman related. “Normally, the role of the police is to assist and help citizens. But here, they’re the ones who oppress us.” Consistently, and across many war and postwar contexts, the police surface as symbols of and forces for rapacious, violent states. Indeed, it is often difficult to imagine worse ambassadors for an emerging wartime or postwar government than members of its own police force.

The final pervasive theme is the uncommon strength of character and purpose of many excluded youth. The male orphan youth who saved US\$13.29 in two years as a houseboy and used it to transform his life, the houseboys who worked for tiny salaries yet managed to send savings to their parents or set aside money for a better job, the secondary school students working part-time as prostitutes to pay school fees—these examples and many more in Burundi and elsewhere illuminate the determination of young people to somehow move their lives forward. The options excluded youth have before them may be meager, and some are clearly dangerous. But the tenacity of so many is absolutely remarkable. This knack for demonstrating focus, resolve, and entrepreneurial ingenuity, even while in truly dire straits, constitutes an extraordinary resource that governments, traditional elders, and development practitioners too often overlook. It is among the issues I will address in chapter 6.

One purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for rethinking how youth challenges in war and postwar situations can be addressed. Examining how gaining acceptance as adults is often impossible, how sexual predation of near-invisible female youth is frequently overlooked, how movement into cities is rational and inevitable for increasing numbers of young people, and how colossal corps of excluded youth both contain young people stuck with varying degrees of exclusion and produce a vibrant, counterpart urban world—all of this aims to shed light on war and postwar youth lives and experiences that remain far from the development limelight. “Mainstream” society may feature powerful people who are instrumental in exploiting

excluded youth. “Community” approaches to development problems may actually further alienate youth from village and neighborhood leaders who actively marginalize them. Working with those considered “youth leaders” in conventional civil society may backfire if they are elites. As Utas states, “Elite youth will never be role models for poor youth” (2012: 4). The two groups tend to be hostile to and suspicious of each other, and not just in war and postwar contexts.

Furthermore, most excluded youth already know that today’s globalized marketplace skirts around neoliberal efforts to hammer out legal, formal economies. Informal economies engulf war and postwar worlds, as well as so many others. Nordstrom’s take on informal, technically illegal economies aligns with youth views in war-affected societies: “The vast majority of those who participate in the extra-legal do not think of themselves as criminals, as smugglers, as ‘really’ breaking the law. In their perspective, states, being only ‘somewhat’ important, are only somewhat noticed, somewhat respected. Vast extra-state economic networks are equally, and sometimes more, important” (2007: 207). Nordstrom contrasts this with the perspectives of traditional “Modernists,” who emphasize states that are “defined and bounded” with “borders that are set and inhabitants that have sovereign identities,” with informal economic realities that feature movements that are “unseen in a world focused on place” (207). In a similar vein, excluded youth in war and postwar states live in worlds that are largely separate from national and international elites, including development and postwar reconstruction officials, mainstream civil society, and traditional communities. The size of youth populations and their sense of separation underscore the need to change how they are engaged and supported.

The Development Response

The Nature of Success

This chapter and this book aim to support promising reforms in the field of international development. The focus on inequality and extreme poverty is growing. The profile of and investment for youth in development work are increasing. These advances collectively provide important opportunities for enhancing the relevance, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of youth work specifically and development work more generally.

To contribute to these encouraging steps, this chapter will analyze forces that shape and challenge international development aid policies and programs. What follows is a general overview of development policies and practice and a consideration of some important implications of the current approach. The analysis also examines where youth generally, and war-affected African youth specifically, sit in the aid enterprise—whether they are heard or ignored, included or excluded, understood or slighted. In addition, the analysis incorporates commentary from interviews with officials and experts about underlying development realities that are unlikely to surface in official reports. But before moving to these concerns, the bright glow of development success must be examined. Indeed, judging from a surge of reports from Western donor governments and the international development community, there seems to be no point in writing this book. Things are going remarkably well these days, many sources announce.

In some ways, important and substantive progress against poverty is being made. Over the past few decades, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document states, “all groups and regions” in the global South “have seen notable improvement” in all components of UNDP’s Human Development Index.¹ UNDP adds that “the South has risen at an unprecedented speed and scale” (2013: 1). A report published around the same time as UNDP’s

Human Development Report 2013 proclaimed similarly splendid progress in Africa. In 2005 the G8 member nations “agreed [to] an ambitious package of support to accelerate development in Africa.”² Increasing aid by US\$11.0 billion a year to the continent, forgiving a total of US\$35.5 billion of debt owed by thirty-five African nations, and boosting investments in health for Africa, the G8 nations proclaimed that remarkable success had been achieved in just eight years (2005–2012).³ In sub-Saharan African nations, HIV infections had descended 37 percent, child mortality decreased 18 percent, the number of Internet users increased by 547 percent, the average annual GDP growth across the region was 5 percent, and twenty-one million more children were enrolled in primary school (One 2013: 5).

The big picture that these and other reports announce is that demonstrable progress in sub-Saharan Africa—a region generally known for the opposite—is well underway. Steve Radelet, a former chief economist for USAID, has focused on seventeen “emerging” African nations that constitute “a growing and dynamic group of emerging African countries that are breaking away from the dismal histories of economic decline and political decay commonly associated with Africa” (Radelet 2010: 10).⁴ He credits this to more democratic and accountable governments, “more sensible” economic policies, declines in national debt, “the spread of new technologies” (namely, mobile phones and the Internet), and “a new generation of public and private leaders” (15). While Radelet argues that development aid to Africa “has played an important secondary role,” he states that “the prototypical negative view that despite large amounts of aid Africa is making no progress is simply out of date and inaccurate” (100).⁵ However, he also cautions that the promising signs in sub-Saharan Africa are new and “there is a long way to go” (39).⁶

While the gains are finally beginning to break the stereotype of sub-Saharan Africa as a hopeless region, three comments on the context of regional progress are required:

- First, much of this literature on Africa’s transformation is being produced by entities that benefit from the sheen of achievement. However understandable, a measure of self-interest underlies the public declarations of progress by major donor nations, multilateral donors, and implementing agencies. They are at least partly touting the positive outcomes of their own investments.
- Second, the trumpeted measures of success are based almost completely on quantitative statistical data. While running numbers is unquestionably useful, it also flattens and simplifies the landscape of

social and economic life. Balancing such information with qualitative research, featuring direct engagement with ordinary citizens, is necessary to gauge the underlying nature of progress (or not) in social and economic development. Fortunately, “the popularity of mixed methods research (MMR) has increased steadily” in recent decades (Heyvaert et al. 2013: 302). It signals a growing awareness that quantitative and qualitative techniques are inherently complementary. Yet quantitative measures and approaches remain far more influential in international development work.

- Third, the upbeat news implicitly suggests that neoliberal economic policies work. While this may be the case (the subject will be addressed shortly), the reported development advances are taking place while income inequality is rising (United Nations Development Programme 2013: 1) and “the proportion of people in sub-Saharan Africa suffering from hunger has barely decreased” since 2005 (One 2013: 5). In other words, recent development advances have aided the poor much less than one might suppose—indeed, they appear to have exacerbated economic inequalities and barely dented hunger’s impact on ordinary lives.

One can detect more than a whiff of distortion here. The great news is rarely accompanied by troubling information that is indeed also present in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

Nowhere is the effort to present a rosy picture of development success in the face of contradictory information more vividly present than in postwar (and postgenocide) Rwanda. To be sure, the rise of Rwanda from near-complete destruction since the end of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when “approximately 800,000 Rwandans lost their lives” in “the swiftest genocide in history” (Burnet 2012: 4), is in many important respects remarkable and noteworthy. Shining accounts of postwar and postgenocide Rwanda have been provided by numerous authors writing about African development (e.g., Radelet 2010) and Rwanda specifically (e.g., Crisafulli and Redmond 2012; Kinzer 2008), and by global luminaries like Bono, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair. UNDP’s *Human Development Report 2013* highlights specific Rwandan successes. The report notes an expansion of employment opportunities in the tourism sector, impressive advances in the health sector, and more women than men in the national parliament (United Nations Development Programme 2013: 72, 81–82, 32). UNDP also presents Rwanda as a country where

“substantial” economic progress has been made (1). The report burnishes the image of the Rwandan government as a standout performer on a host of fronts. Despite such important successes, however, published documentation reveals a second Rwandan reality as well: a country where disturbing actions have been undertaken by the Rwandan government since the genocide and civil war ended and where serious problems facing many Rwandans persist.

The United Nations embodies both sides of this phenomenon. On the one hand, UNDP has produced assessments that focus on successes in Rwanda today (e.g., United Nations Development Programme 2007, 2013). On the other, two widely publicized, high-level United Nations reports detail the nature of conflict and war crimes in neighboring DRC—some of which lead their way back to Rwandan government forces and the highest levels of government in Rwanda. In 2010 the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report featuring findings from extensive field research of “the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law” taking place in the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003 (2010: 2). Among the report’s conclusions are that “the vast majority of violent incidents . . . are the result of armed conflict and if proven in a judicial process, point to the commission of war crimes as serious breaches of international humanitarian law” (11–12). The report states that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which eventually became the national army of the current Rwandan regime, in concert with its military allies (*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre*, or AFDL), apparently conducted “systematic and widespread attacks” on Rwandan Hutus that “could be characterized as crimes of genocide” (14). The French researcher Gérard Prunier has estimated that Rwandan forces caused the deaths of close to 300,000 Rwandan Hutu (French 2013), while Reyntjens and Lemarchand provide estimates of “the number of [Rwandan Hutu] refugees killed by RPF soldiers” that range between 200,000 and 350,000 (2011: 21).

The second UN report arrived in 2012 as a submission to the United Nations Security Council. The report found that a rebel group operating in eastern DRC called the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) was committing serious human rights violations.⁷ The authors of the report stated that “Rwandan officials exercise overall command and strategic planning for M23” (Hege et al. 2012: 13). In addition, troubling reports on the situation inside Rwanda regularly surface. It has been asserted that political dissent is routinely quashed, as “the government uses detention and violence to shut down political opposition” (Roth 2013). Some appraisals of President Paul Kagame’s regime are

scathing.⁸ Reportedly, the strength of Rwanda's economy is partly due to "the exploitation of Congolese [mineral] resources" and the fact that foreign aid donors "provide as much as 50 percent of the country's budget every year" (French 2013). Estimates of the number of civilians killed by government forces since the genocide are only that: it has proven difficult to verify the figures. However, specific reported estimates of RPF killings while the 1994 genocide took place and by the Rwandan national army since it ended range from 23,722 to 62,690 Rwandan civilians killed.⁹ Taking approximations for those killed in the DRC into account (noted above) as well, the total reported estimates of Rwandan civilians killed by the RPF during the genocide and by the Rwandan national army since the genocide ended range from 223,722 to 412,690. The prospect of failed adulthood, in addition, directly threatens most Rwandan youth (see chapter 3).

The easy availability of such startling information about Rwanda and its government, and the international attention that it has attracted, raises a question: why is so much news about Rwanda so unbalanced? Why is it common to find institutions and individuals touting grand success in Rwanda while scarcely, if at all, mentioning disturbing and seemingly inescapable dimensions of the nation and its government? Why are serious youth problems overlooked in a country featuring an unusually youthful population and a legacy of civil war and genocide in which youth played a central role? There are the specifics of the Rwandan case, including the belief that many international governments and major donor institutions have awarded Rwanda's government a "genocide credit," which forgives most negative government behavior because of guilt caused by the international community's muted response to the 1994 genocide.¹⁰ There also are indications of donor agencies practicing self-censorship, intentionally shielding troubling dimensions of Rwandan realities from view (Sommers 2012b: 20–21, 226). It appears that Rwanda's rise from devastation following the genocide to its current state becomes an inspirational tale only if the alarming elements are swept under the rug. And so, for many institutions and observers, they are.

The sidestepping of untidy realities also surfaces in many descriptions of youth development work. While the omissions are dissimilar to the Rwandan case in one obvious and important respect—they do not pertain to human rights abuses, genocide, or war crimes—they are nonetheless significant. A dip into development agency literature reveals tendencies to homogenize youth while significantly underemphasizing the expanse of youth marginalization. A pervasive view is that, "rather than seeing young people

as a challenge,” youth should be seen “as partners who contribute to socio-economic growth and development” (Making Cents International 2012: 8). The suggestion is that the powers that be should accept, engage with, and help empower youth. Although such arguments are undoubtedly important, they also promote a simplistic vision of change and the sense that all youth are more or less the same: helping any youth is better than helping no youth. As I will discuss later in this chapter, homogenizing youth facilitates the disproportionate access of members of well-adjusted, elite youth minorities into aid initiatives, the accent on rural areas and formal economic sectors instead of cities and informal sectors, and an implicit emphasis on male over female youth. Marginalized urban youth working in informal sectors tend to be overlooked in favor of youth who farm or elite and mostly male youth who aim to work in formal sectors. The arguments suggest that including young people in social and economic development is pretty easy to achieve, even as development efforts often run against the grain of everyday marginalized youth realities.

Questions about the veracity of evidence that development agencies share about themselves—regarding development challenges generally and work involving youth specifically—is a central theme in this chapter. As with spectacular depictions of Rwanda, it is often difficult to know what realities lay beneath professions of institutional success. Stiglitz, for example, details how the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides statistical data that reflects well on the work of the IMF. He notes that the institution “is responsible for the collection of valuable economic statistics” and that “by and large it does a good job.” He also notes that “the data [the IMF] reports are compromised by its operating responsibilities; to make its programs *seem* to work, to make the numbers ‘add up,’ economic forecasts have to be adjusted.” For example, gross domestic product (GDP) forecasts for particular countries are “*negotiated* as part of an IMF program” with recipient governments. “Such conflicts of interest,” Stiglitz concludes, “invariably arise when the operating agency is also responsible for statistics” (2003: 232; emphasis in original).

The conflict of interest issue also arises in Easterly’s assessment of the integrity of aid agency evaluations. “Although evaluation has taken place for a long time in foreign aid,” he explains, “it is often self-evaluation, using reports from the same people who implemented the project” (2006: 193). The questionable quality of many development aid program or project evaluations is a second important theme that will emerge in this chapter. A review of twenty-nine program interventions involving youth in sub-Saharan Africa illustrates how

evaluation concerns arose as significant during analysis. Drawing their sample from “a world-wide inventory of interventions designed to integrate young people into the labor market” (World Bank 2009: 11), the authors found that, in general, the youth programs “were not evaluated appropriately.” A mere two of the twenty-nine programs (6.9 percent) “had enough information to suggest a positive impact” while “16 programs [55 percent] lacked any information on results or the level of evaluation was unknown” (12).

The remainder of chapter 4 divides into two parts. In part 1 I review and assess some of the tendencies and oversights, and general strengths and weaknesses, that emerge in literature on international development and postwar reconstruction. I pay particular attention to the influential views of leading thinkers on the state of international development. Considerations of how the current international development arrangement affects vast populations of mostly marginalized youth in war-affected African nations are integrated into the discussion. In part 2 I highlight key themes that donor officials and development, youth, and evaluation experts shared during interviews mainly undertaken in 2011–2012 about current international development challenges, development efforts that target war-affected youth, and how international development initiatives are evaluated.¹¹ Relevant commentary from donor and NGO officials made at three public events in Washington, D.C., in 2011–2012 (detailed in chapter 1) also is included.

Highlighting interviews with and commentary from officials and experts in part 2 of the chapter was necessary because many of the insights they shared are not found in published reports. Elemental realities about forces and tendencies that shape how development work gets done often are not written down. The interviews and exchanges thus fill an important gap in the information base for this chapter.

Part One: Sectors and Statistics

SCRATCHING BENEATH THE SURFACE: THE INTERNATIONAL AID SETUP

Reflecting on the aftereffects of economic globalization, Stiglitz argues that “privatization without the necessary institutional infrastructure in transition countries led to asset stripping rather than wealth creation” (2003: 220). The case of wartime Liberia, with its weak institutional infrastructure and expert asset stripper, Liberia’s former rebel leader and president Charles Taylor, supports this statement. During his nation’s civil war, particularly in the early

and mid-1990s, Taylor absolutely thrived. He called his wartime territory “Greater Liberia,” which, at its peak, included “virtually all of Liberia and parts of Guinea and Sierra Leone” (Harris 1999: 434). Indeed, it appears that Taylor accepted a *reduction* in the territory he ruled when he was elected as Liberia’s president, by an overwhelming landslide, in 1997. Greater Liberia was a privatization scheme that West African scholar William Reno called “Taylor’s Shadow State” (1993: 178). A very raw form of globalization flourished in Greater Liberia (popularly and appropriately known as Taylorland), where foreign firms paid Taylor for access to the region’s diamonds, timber, rubber, and iron ore. In Taylorland’s first five years alone (1990–1994), “the total yields of Taylor’s warlord economy approached \$200–250 million a year” (Reno 1998: 99).

The astonishing success of Taylorland (for Charles Taylor) obviously is not the sort of scheme that proponents of globalization and neoliberal economics have envisioned. Yet Taylor’s wholesale exploitation of Liberia during wartime is a component of today’s global economy. Valuable raw materials routinely exit war zones and enter the global market. A popular example is eastern DRC, where neither the Congolese state nor anything approximating a regulated, formal economic sector has yet to affect the lucrative trade in what are known as “conflict minerals” (such as gold, wolframite, coltan, and cassiterite; see, for example, Vircoulon 2011).¹² Illicit economies, in fact, may be much larger than legitimate economies in war-affected African states, among others. Nordstrom, for instance, reports that United Nations economists based in postwar Angola “estimate that over three-quarters of the [Angolan] economy runs outside of formal state and legal channels” (2007: 15). But she also concludes that “reputable multi-national corporations most commonly violate the laws controlling trade” (2006), which helps explain how Charles Taylor could make a fortune before he unceremoniously exited Liberia’s presidency in August 2003 and left his nation in a phenomenal state of ruin. Taylor’s profiteering received direct support from many economic actors. As Duffield notes, “War economies are highly criminalized. . . . Today’s so-called warlords or failed states may act locally, but to survive they have to think globally. In this respect, a high level of complicity among international companies, offshore banking facilities, and Northern governments has assisted the development of war economies. . . . In the early 1990s, for example, the Liberian warlord Charles Taylor . . . was supplying, among other things, a third of France’s tropical hardwood requirements through French companies” (2000: 84).

The manipulation of global capitalism’s underbelly to one’s own ends, something Charles Taylor demonstrated not long ago, plays a small role in

global debates about economic development. Perhaps this is because Liberia is a small country and Taylor is no longer in power. On the other hand, Liberia is attracting attention for other reasons: increasingly it is considered an important example of how governments and nations can recover successfully from civil war. Radelet, for example, considers Liberia a “threshold country,” one of six African nations demonstrating “promising but less dramatic or less sustained change” than his seventeen emerging African nations, noted earlier in this chapter (2010: 12). A rosier assessment comes from Karin Landgren, the United Nations secretary-general’s special representative and head of the UN mission in Liberia, who considers Liberia “on the verge of becoming a true success story” (United Nations News Centre 2012).

However, like Rwanda, Liberia receives international acclaim while many if not most of its youth feel dangerously left out. Maclay and Özerdem underscore this latter sentiment by stating that “Liberia is in danger of losing its youth (again) to armed groups who can offer them a sense of importance and personal emancipation” (2010: 355). Evidence of the presence of “rebel behavior youth” (noted earlier) and the preponderance of urban rioting involving youth further suggest that the nation’s achievements are an aspect of postwar life in Liberia that may not, in the end, reach many Liberians.¹³ As Utas has observed, Liberia’s “socio-political cracks are twofold: first between different regions within the country, and secondly between those who have and those who have not” (2011).¹⁴

The contrast between quantitative evidence of development success and qualitative evidence of youth in free fall is among the themes that will surface again later in this chapter. It is clear that quantitative research data regularly trumps qualitative research in terms of influence. Yet it is also clear that quantitative data alone cannot illuminate adequately the dynamics of youth exclusion and alienation. As Tekola, Griffin, and Camfield observe, “often accurate data relating to people’s judgments, attitudes, preferences, priorities, and/or perceptions . . . are difficult to collect using quantitative research methods” (2009: 74). Employing quality, targeted, trust-based qualitative research to probe youth perspectives promises to expand understanding of youth exclusion and alienation and complement the broad-spectrum information that quantitative data sets normally provide.

Some context is required before turning to detail such concerns. The general framework for development in Africa today, including in war-affected Africa, is a set of international policies and forces that directly recognize and

promote engagement with globalization. The emphatic policy emphasis on opening developing country economies to global markets reportedly began on a plane ride in 1979, when the World Bank president, Robert McNamara, and his deputy, Ernest Stern, drew the outlines of what would eventually be known as structural adjustment (Easterly 2006: 65) or the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The SAP approach to government reform rose to prominence in the 1980s, when many developing country governments had run up massive debts, in part because they subsidized the price of staple foods and provided many government (public sector) jobs. Moss asserts that the “era of structural adjustment” began with Senegal’s loan agreements with the IMF (granted “in exchange for a set of policy changes”) in 1979. By the early 1990s, just about every African government had reached deals with the IMF and the World Bank that combined “some combination of aid and policy change to restructure the economy and the role of the state.” Moss adds that the policies that informed the structural adjustment era more or less continue to the present, albeit with updated policies and names (2011: 110).¹⁵

One of those names is neoliberalism, which “was initially codified in Africa” by a World Bank consultant named Elliot Berg in 1981, shortly after structural adjustment came into being (Bond 2005: 232). Ruiters notes that, as with structural adjustment, “the neoliberal track is to market services and reduce expectations and claims on the state” (2006: 291). In Bond’s view, the push to privatize in Africa, sparked by SAP/neoliberal policies, “gave scant regard to maintaining local employment or production levels” (2005: 232) at a time when youth populations in Africa were expanding rapidly. The general approaches of SAP and neoliberalism are virtually the same as those of the Washington Consensus, a term coined by the economist John Williamson in 1990. He used it to refer to “policies most commonly given as advice to Latin American countries in the late 1980s” (Moss 2011: 112).¹⁶ The emphasis on streamlining and rationalizing national economies led Stiglitz to observe that, “in practice, the Washington Consensus put little emphasis on equity” (2007: 27).¹⁷

Regardless of what the development policies are called, their thrust is much the same: smaller, leaner governments and larger, more dynamic private sectors are thought to fuel free trade and economic growth. Africa, this philosophy asserts, can develop only through increased engagement in the global marketplace. This engagement is spearheaded by SAP/neoliberal/Washington Consensus policies that the IMF negotiates with developing country governments in exchange for loans. The IMF then monitors implementation of the policies and whether governments are sticking to their loan conditions. Moss

has found that if governments can keep to IMF conditions, then “the other donors, including the World Bank and most bilaterals” are much more likely to invest in their countries as well. Alternatively, a “no” vote by the IMF on loan agreements “could cut off a country from most of its external financiers” (2011: 132, 133). Even among powerful donor agencies and nations, the IMF’s influence over Washington Consensus colleagues appears to be predominant.¹⁸

African youth surface in these discussions mainly as an employment challenge. Poor youth are likely to accept any job they can get. Most often, this means “working long hours under poor conditions in the informal economy” (International Labour Organization 2011: 5). In addition, unemployment rates tend to contain inherent distortions because people working as little as an hour a week are considered to be employed (Garcia and Fares 2008: 28).

Kristina Becker defines informal economic sectors as “the unregulated non-formal portion of the market economy that produces goods and services for sale or for other forms of remuneration” (2004: 11). Outside of farming, the informal economy is, by far, the main place where Africans work. Its size “is continuously growing in most developing countries, even in rural areas” (45). It has been predicted that “the majority of this generation’s workers [in sub-Saharan Africa] will remain in the informal sector for the duration of their working lives” (Filmer and Fox 2014: 5). The following statistics from an African Development Bank official shed additional light on the informal economy’s predominance: “Little attention has been paid to the role of [the] informal sector in fostering growth and creating jobs. In fact, the informal sector contributes about 55 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP and 80 per cent of the labour force. Nine in 10 rural and urban workers have informal jobs in Africa and most employees are women and youth” (Ncube 2013).¹⁹

A common response to African youth employment needs is to recommend more education and training. The International Labour Organization (ILO) calls for much more: “Sustained support of young people, through expansion of the social protection system, long term investment in education and training, hiring subsidies to promote employment of young people, employment intensive investment, sectoral policy, etc. is needed now more than ever” (2011: 7). The ILO’s recipe presumes that governments are focused on youth challenges and are able to combine coherent, relevant, coordinated, and viable strategies with extensive resources to fund them. But African governments may have neither, particularly those emerging from war. As I will consider later in this chapter, the reach of policies and programs is too often finite and the priorities of governments and international partners frequently point in other directions. Finally and crucially, constructive consultation with

ordinary youth themselves, to ensure that investments align with ordinary youth priorities, may not occur.

Developing country governments and powerful international donors are focusing increasingly on poverty. Their collective efforts are embodied in the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that came online in 2000 and set 2015 as the year when the goals would be achieved (negotiations on post-MDG follow-up are well underway). There are eight MDG goals and eighteen targets. Some are considerably more ambitious than others. For example, Target 3 aims by 2015 to have all children in the world on track to complete primary school and Target 4 aims to “eliminate gender disparity” in all of the world’s primary and secondary schools “no later than 2015.” On the other hand, while it is important to recognize and appreciate the significance of an MDG target for youth, it is also the case that Target 16 contains no precise objective. It merely aims to “develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth” (United Nations Millennium Project 2005: xviii, xix).²⁰ Whereas Targets 3 and 4 feature specific endpoints, Target 16 signals a starting point for future action.

Work that is directed specifically at Target 16 appears to be minimal and complex. A common approach to challenges that huge youth populations create is to provide programs for relatively small proportions of young people. An example of this trend is a major effort undertaken by Spain and the United Nations, called the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, which aims to “accelerate progress” toward achieving the MDGs on time (Carravilla 2011: 6). The many types of activities funded included youth, employment, and migration programs in fifteen countries.²¹ Just one is in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Sudan (Salzano 2013: 8, 22). There, the program aimed to provide “skills development and livelihood opportunities to 2,500 young men and women aged between 15 to 30 years” (Carravilla 2011: 6). This one program involved eleven UN agencies and twelve national “Ministries and Commissions, in conjunction with their relevant State Ministries” (7). Perhaps not surprisingly, an evaluator noted that the bevy of UN agencies created difficulties in coordination, an overlap in the activities performed, and “an increase in running costs” (10).²² Accordingly, although “particular attention” would be paid to “migrant youth, including returnees and demobilised soldiers” in the South Sudan program (6), the total number of youth program participants constitutes an estimated 0.001 percent of Southern Sudanese in that age range (Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation 2010: 10).²³

A proponent of the MDG movement is the economist Jeffrey Sachs, who

has argued that targeted investments can dramatically improve the lives of poor people. His approach is technical and pragmatic. Take, for instance, his consideration of Africa: “Africa’s problems, I have come to understand, are especially difficult but still solvable with practical and proven technologies. Diseases can be controlled, crop yields can be sharply increased, and basic infrastructure such as paved roads and electricity can be extended to the villages. A combination of investments well attuned to local needs and conditions can enable African economies to break out of the poverty trap” (2005: 208). Those trapped in poverty, Sachs argues, are those who are “unable on their own to escape from extreme material deprivation” (19). To demonstrate how his ideas, and those of the MDGs, can address the poverty trap, Sachs initiated the Millennium Villages Project (MVP). This emphatically rural-focused initiative has transformed fourteen African villages into pilot projects that aspire “to show that a coordinated and well-designed combination of interventions at the village level can end poverty at low cost” (Moss 2011: 142). Across five years and with a unit cost of US\$120 per villager (all spent on “quick-impact investments” in various economic sectors), the MVP, Sachs declared, can reach the goal of “empowering the community to achieve sustained long-term growth” (2008: 238).

Sachs and his MVP promote the impression that reaching and transforming the conditions of even the world’s poorest people is easy to do: all you need are sensible, material solutions and a bit of money to make them go. Munk characterizes Sachs’s optimism about the MVP in the following way: “with the right interventions, success was almost guaranteed” (2013: 64). The approach also underscores how frequently farming and rural life is the focus of development work in Africa, and how communities and governments are presumed to be functional and inclusive. These factors are significant, given the difficulties youth face becoming adults, gaining acceptance from village elders and support from governments, and finding ways to make a dignified living in rural areas. Nothing in the MVP approach, for example, addresses difficulties that rural male youth often face in gaining access to land and managing to build a house. The compelling attractions and logic of urban migration for youth in Africa and elsewhere, moreover, play no part in the MVP vision.

The MVP has attracted considerable attention in development circles, due in part to the project’s propensity for touting sterling project results. An example, from the MVP Web site, is the following: “Simple solutions like providing high-yield seeds, fertilizers, medicines, drinking wells, and materials to build school rooms and clinics are effectively combating extreme poverty and nourishing communities into a new age of health and

opportunity” (Millennium Villages 2013). Yet Munk has noted that “a growing number of journalists, economists, and development experts were uncovering inconsistencies and errors in the Millennium project’s published results” (2013: 217). Among those who wondered whether the outcomes were quite as positive as MVP was proclaiming was Clemens, who has written that the Millennium Villages were “not being as carefully evaluated” as they should be (2010). He and a coauthor have further asserted that the MVP’s own evaluation design “implicitly relies on the assumption that no changes would have occurred without the MVP interventions” (Clemens and Demombynes 2010: 25).

Speculation about the MVP’s impact increased when a published evaluation of MVP received criticism “suggesting that the research team’s study design and analysis were weak, and that they were less than transparent with their data and methods” (Editors of the *Lancet* 2012: 1946). This was not an independent evaluation: Sachs was a coauthor (Pronyk et al. 2012), and the evaluation team’s lead author, Paul Pronyk, directed monitoring and evaluation at the Columbia University center connected to the MVP (Oransky 2012). Responding to the critiques, Pronyk admitted to errors in analysis (2012: 1946) and subsequently left his post.²⁴ Worstall concluded that “according to the evidence we have so far this sort of intervention has no effect at all. We’re spending money to achieve nothing” (2012). Clemens noted that, according to data that he had examined,

[MVP] is making a one-time expenditure of about U.S.\$6,000 per household, or U.S.\$12,000 per household that is lifted out of poverty. These are, respectively, 17 times and 34 times the local income per capita. That’s an astronomical sum. If used to support other interventions, or simply given to the families in question, it could clearly have very large effects on the health and education of their children. No attempt has ever been made by this project to fully transparently report and document its full cost, and compare its effectiveness to alternative uses of scarce aid funds in the same setting. (cited in Oransky 2012)

Following the controversy surrounding the MVP evaluation, MVP instituted an International Scientific Expert Advisory Group to “oversee how the MVP assesses the impact of its work” (Butler 2012).

In the end, development may not be as easy to do as Sachs and the MVP had first envisioned. Munk’s detailed examination of the MVP sheds light on what ultimately took place. For example, in 2010, after three and a half years of MVP work in Dertu, Kenya, and US\$2.5 million invested by the MVP in the

village, “there were growing rifts between neighbors, caused by infighting and envy. Clans quarreled for control over the project’s largesse. The village’s growing resources had thrust the people of Dertu into a new economic order marked by inequality. People were more discontented than usual” (2013: 200). “Relatively speaking,” Munk found, the Millennium Villages were “‘islands of prosperity’” (228). But even inside the villages, the final results did not match Sachs’s original “quest to validate his scientific approach to ending poverty” (231). Munk’s assessment was that the results did not match this ambition: “[Sachs had] used the Millennium Villages Project as a laboratory to test his theories and to prove that his series of ‘interventions’ could transform the lives of the world’s poorest people. He’d spent more than \$120 million on his experiment. For all that, however, he had misjudged the complex, shifting reality in the villages” (231).

The Millennium Villages Project illustrates the growing propensity to apply technocratic approaches to reversing endemic poverty in international development work. The approach connects to a second pervasive trend: the penchant for determining development success by counting things. This returns us to the remarkable influence of Robert McNamara on the international aid enterprise. A former USAID administrator, Andrew Natsios, credits McNamara with driving the Western donor aid enterprise—from multi-lateral donors like the World Bank to bilateral donors like USAID—toward today’s emphasis on metrics in development work. He bases this assertion on McNamara’s application of a new “measurement-based decision-making and policy analysis” approach (developed by the RAND Corporation) to his management of the Pentagon as U.S. secretary of defense in 1965 (Natsios 2010: 15). McNamara subsequently imported this approach to the World Bank in 1968, when he became its president.

It is useful to briefly reflect on the application of Secretary McNamara’s “corporate approach to management” when he was secretary of defense during the Vietnam War (Natsios 2010: 15). Natsios excerpts Colin Powell’s autobiography to illustrate how McNamara was instructing his commanders to measure things that, it turned out, had little or nothing to do with winning the war. Powell recalled a visit to Vietnam by Secretary McNamara. The gist of what McNamara promoted during the trip was, “Measure it and it has meaning. Measure it and it is real.” Powell expresses difficulty in uncovering evidence that “indicated that we were beating the Viet Cong. Beating them? Most of the time we could not even find them.” Powell relates how he and his fellow American commanders knew that what they were counting “was

nonsense, even as we did it.” McNamara’s calamitous emphasis on finding “precise indices [to] measure the immeasurable” (Powell 1996: 103; cited in Natsios 2010: 16) promoted an impression of wartime success that was at best a distortion and at worst dead wrong.

McNamara nonetheless imported to the World Bank the idea that you can determine success through quantitative measurement. Natsios details how this idea has influenced the international development world more broadly. Here are five examples of its impact:

1. A strong emphasis on compliance with agency regulations. Natsios argues that, at both the World Bank and USAID, “regulatory pressures” have emphasized “accountability and control” over “good development practice.” This “threatens [development] program integrity” by favoring “process over program substance” (2010: 2, 5). Among the results have been an “excessive focus on compliance requirements to the exclusion of other work,” a “focus on the short term over the long term,” and a “subtle but insidious redefinition of development” that de-emphasizes “good development practice, policy reform, institution building, and sustainability” (40).
2. Decisive influence on the practice of development economics. Leading development economists play a prominent role in setting the priorities and practices of international development (the ideas of some of the most influential will be discussed shortly). Amadae states that reliance on “the Rand-style, objective, cost-benefit strategy of policy formation” eventually turned this strategy into “the universal status quo in development economics—a position it still holds today” (2003: 75; cited in Natsios 2010: 16).
3. Direct influence on how programs are designed and evaluated. By 1969, USAID had “developed its own RAND-like approach to development program design through what was called the LOGFRAME, or Logical Framework approach, which requires all aid project documents to describe Activities, Outputs, Purposes, and Goals, thus focusing on outputs rather than inputs” (Natsios 2010: 16). The LOGFRAME is arguably now the dominant model for measuring the impact of development work in the United States and far beyond.²⁵
4. Bolstering the priority of programs that produce quantifiable results. Natsios suggests that the main reason that international aid agencies increasingly support public health programs is because “public health

outcomes are more easily and accurately measured than most other programs, other than disaster assistance, and have great political appeal to the media, public, parliaments, and congresses.” Such investments tend to be safe and popular: no interest groups oppose programs that reduce child and maternal mortality rates, for example (7). Success in building the capacity of institutions such as government health ministries is more difficult to measure than, say, the number of children who receive a vaccine. As a result, there is “more funding for those development sectors in the hard sciences, such as public health and medicine, and less to the soft sciences such as democracy and governance programs” (7).

5. A heavy accent on providing measurable public services. This is reflected, Natsios observes, in the MDGs, “which measure service delivery or service standards, not the institutional development needed to carry them out.” Natsios argues that “the institutional viability of developing country education ministries is far more important” than MDG indicators that stress quantifiable results like the number of new schools built or how many children are in class (38).

Unlike Sachs, other proponents of the MDGs, and many more, Natsios is deeply concerned about the focus on countable results in international aid and the attendant prominence of risk aversion instead of “experimentation, risk taking, and innovation” (35). “Nothing could be further from good development theory and practice,” he stresses, than the misapplication of “measurements and program standards . . . to development programs in poor countries” (4). Yet, to a large degree, this is what has taken place.

I will now briefly address three questions that arise from the neoliberal/Washington Consensus approach to economic development and its reliance on quantifiable results. They collectively assess a selection of diagnoses and remedies that several leading development economists have proposed and weigh development concerns of relevance to youth, Africa, and war and postwar contexts.

IS THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH APPROPRIATE?

There are those, such as Jeffrey Sachs (among many others), who believe that development aid investments from multilateral and bilateral donors are largely working. According to this perspective, the main problem is that

aid investment is much too limited. Among the major critics of this view of international aid are the economists William Easterly and Dambisa Moyo. To some degree, their arguments boil down to the following: international aid fails in large part because it supports venal, corrupt governments. There is no poverty trap, Easterly argues, because “the poorest countries *can* grow and develop on their own . . . they do not have to wait for the West to save them” (2006: 40; emphasis in original). Furthermore, “The recent stagnation of the poorest countries appears to have more to do with awful government than with a poverty trap, contrary to the UN/Sachs hypothesis” (43).²⁶ Moyo takes the governance issue a step further. Arguing that “the point about [government] corruption in Africa is not that it exists: the point is that aid is one of its greatest aides” (2009: 48). She then describes “the vicious cycle of aid” that plagues Africa’s poor: “Foreign aid props up corrupt governments—providing them with freely usable cash. These corrupt governments interfere with the rule of law, the establishment of transparent civil institutions and the protection of civil liberties, making both domestic and foreign investment in poor countries unattractive. Greater opacity and fewer investments reduce economic growth, which leads to fewer job opportunities and increasing poverty levels. In response to growing poverty, donors give more aid, which continues the downward spiral of poverty” (49).

Despite what appears to be strong divergence between these two views of development, there are points of convergence. It is safe to say that no one is endorsing support for corruption: part of the debate is whether development agencies can sidestep dreadful governments and get aid directly to poor people. On this concern, Easterly and Sachs appear to be in surprising alignment. Easterly argues that development support should not be stopped but delivered in ways that “aid individuals rather than governments.” His point is to replace aid for “the impossible task of general economic development” with targeted investments for “the poorest people in the world,” so that they can receive vaccines, antibiotics, food supplements, improved seeds, fertilizer, boreholes, good roads, textbooks, and so on (2006: 368, 369). Sachs asserts that Easterly’s list for aiding the poor “includes the kinds of investments being supported by the Millennium Village Project.” He concludes that the difference between Easterly and himself lies in separate assessments of the current international aid situation (according to Sachs, where he sees “a track record of success,” Easterly sees “failure”) rather than in what aid should do (2008: 49).

Easterly’s development critique expands in a subsequent work. It also

appears to have evolved from an emphasis on delivering development inputs to the poor to bolstering their rights. The more recent work delivers a broadside against “today’s development focus on technocratic solutions and blindness to rights violations by the indigenous autocrats who perpetrate them” (2013: 45). In his view, the prevailing approach arose in part from “a special economics that discarded free choice and individualism.” The specialized field eventually “would be called development economics” (44). Development economists contribute to what Easterly calls “a Tyranny of Experts” (7). “The implicit vision in development today,” Easterly explains, “is that of well-intentioned autocrats advised by technical experts,” which he considers “*authoritarian development*” (6; emphasis in original). Proponents of this development approach “believe the experts advising the autocrats know better than poor individuals how to solve their problems” (7). The prevailing expert-autocrat form of development, Easterly contends, is supported by a “technocratic illusion,” which asserts that “poverty results from a shortage of expertise, whereas poverty is really about a shortage of rights” (7). For Easterly, development work should advocate “that the poor should have the same rights as the rich” (340).

What Easterly seeks may be much more than what the established “rights-based approach” (RBA) has long been after. RBA is a method that “emerged as a new development paradigm in the late 1990s” (Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter 2012: 473; see also Uvin 2004). “The rights-based sector,” in addition, “now involves substantial development aid monies” (Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter 2012: 485). Although it is unspecified, the problem that the RBA would seem to present to Easterly is how it has been implemented: through a reliance on experts. As Kindornay, Ro, and Carpenter explain about RBA, “specialized consultants and advisors are elaborating and mainstreaming the [RBA] paradigm through reports, workshops, and project evaluations, ensuring that rights-based thinking on development problems will continue to deepen and proliferate for years to come” (473).²⁷ Easterly intimates how his thesis should be implemented through streamlined arguments, such as, “when the rights of local people are respected, new trades happen, new technologies happen, new public services happen” (2013: 10). But what Easterly delivers, in the end, is a critique more than a path toward reform. “Development,” he concludes, “may have to give up its authoritarian mind-set to survive” because “unrestrained power will always turn out to be the enemy of development” (350, 351). Exactly what should happen next is less clear.

For her part, Moyo argues that all Western aid should end: none is good. At

the same time, she lauds the sort of “tough love” engagement with developing country governments that the Washington Consensus endorses: “While international donors and organizations must be commended for shifting the development ideology from the bad economic policies of the 1970s (mainly statist) to the good market policies on the books today (introduced on the back of the Washington Consensus), we need to remind them that without the elimination of aid effective implementation of the new, better, development regime will remain shoddy, ineffectual and even disastrous” (2009: 153–154). In Moyo’s words, the “good governance” she seeks will “naturally emerge in the absence of the glut of aid” because such aid reduces “the cost (risk) of doing business in Africa” (143). Neoliberal/Washington Consensus policies encourage governance that is “good” and economic environments worthy of private investment—as long as the policies are shorn of most donor aid (notably, in Moyo’s estimation, Chinese government investments are generally acceptable).

A cornerstone of Moyo’s argument is that shearing away nearly all development aid from African governments undercuts state corruption and spurs ethical, or at least legal and much more transparent, business practices. Yet the cases of Charles Taylor and eastern DRC underscore how some businesses go wherever potential profits arise. In addition, informal sectors seem to thrive regardless of good or bad governance. As Ferguson notes about the “shadow economy” (a common name for informal sectors), “Africa is perhaps distinctive in that, on much of the continent, [the shadow economy] is generally reckoned to be larger than the formal sector” (2006: 15).²⁸ Its significance, moreover, is frequently underestimated. In a World Bank report, Adams states the obvious: “The informal sector has emerged as a reality and has to be recognized for policy purposes” (2008: 17). Nordstrom speculates on why informal economic sectors are routinely overlooked: “It would seem that real profits, and real development, are to be found in the places economic analysts are not looking. Perhaps we don’t look because we would have to reassess our most fundamental—and cherished—ideas about power, and about the morality and the legality of economics and development” (2007: 54–55). Vibrant informal sectors constitute one example of underexamined realities in mainstream assessments of development today. Qualitative research on economic and social dimensions of life is a productive way to understand and analyze important concerns. Later in part 1, I provide examples of the necessary and complementary role that qualitative research can play.

HOW CAN WAR AFFECT THE POLICIES AND PRACTICE OF DEVELOPMENT?

The sort of trade that surfaces during wars or, more generally, when states are weak, targets whatever is potentially profitable at the moment. Addison observes, for example, that wars lead businesspeople to rely on trade instead of production, particularly trade featuring “the buying and selling of scarce commodities” (2011: 369). Such economic activity promises to provide immediate returns. That is the point. Farmers respond to wartime uncertainty by turning toward “subsistence production and away from producing for the market,” an indication of how communities “focus increasingly on short-term survival rather than on investment in the future” (368). An emphasis on the here and now dictates virtually all economic behavior. These are also times when economic inequality—between ordinary people retrenching to survive and opportunists with capital reaping big profits—intensifies. Finally, the atmosphere of uncertainty that wars produce both “reduces incentives to invest in institutions that have long-term benefits” and opens the door for “opportunistic behaviour” to flourish “in communities, the private sector, and the state” (369).

Two prominent economists suggest different sorts of remedies to the economic expedience, opportunism, and uncertainty that wars incite. Del Castillo begins by asserting that “post-conflict economic reconstruction and normal development are strikingly different.” Like other developing nations, postwar governments and national economies must set “the framework for growth and development.” But they must “above all promote national reconciliation and the consolidation of peace” (2008: 82). To do this, international aid institutions must do three things. First, the major international Western donors must provide more flexible terms for paying debts and receiving aid. Doing so, del Castillo asserts, would cost “a pittance” compared to what a relapse into conflict would cost. Second, she advocates beginning aid deliveries right after war subsides. Waiting until the postwar government “has a better managerial and absorptive capacity,” she warns, “can have tragic consequences.” Finally, del Castillo argues that the increasingly popular development approach that both Sachs and Easterly effectively endorse—that is, channeling aid “to projects that donors carry out independently of the national government, and that involve their own contractors and experts”—calls for reassessment (308).

Del Castillo’s critiques of this approach are all worthy of consideration: it “weakens the government, is resented by the local population, and creates

aid dependency.” Significantly, in its place, del Castillo recommends measures that run counter to the neoliberal development philosophy. Rather than advocating the reduction or elimination of government subsidies, she argues that donor aid should be put through postwar governments for specific purposes, like providing subsidies and price supports to bolster the agricultural sector. Recognizing that tariffs can hamper global trade, she also recommends that bilateral donors provide postwar countries with preferential access to markets in their home countries (as well as technical support and credit) (2008: 308). In a subsequent publication, del Castillo adds that, “to be effective, reconstruction aid needs to be provided in an integrated manner and be considerate of local conditions and needs” (2011: 12).

Collier’s take on poverty and growth features a series of traps, the first two of which are directly relevant to this study: the conflict trap and its close relative, the coup trap. Although “all societies have conflict,” in impoverished countries belonging to the “bottom billion” violence tends to be either prolonged (civil war) or swift (a coup d’état). Both cases are “costly and can be repetitive,” and both “can trap a country in poverty” (2007: 17). As with del Castillo, Collier urges that postwar responses require large and extended infusions of external aid. Since “the typical postconflict country starts with truly terrible governance, institutions, and policies . . . big aid needs to be sustained during the first decade postconflict, not just the first couple of years” (106). The lesson to draw from this is that major aid agencies should concentrate their work “in the most difficult environments,” accept increased risk and failure rates, and intervene strategically. Collier castigates the politics surrounding the aid situation in major Western donor nations that render their aid agencies risk averse and unable to “afford failure.” “No aspect of domestic policy,” says Collier, “is run this badly” (184).

Del Castillo and Collier both recommend that much more money be invested in war and postwar reconstruction. Two detailed accounts of a massive influx of donor aid into war-affected Afghanistan shed sharp, instructive light on the difficulties that can surface when this is done. The featured donor is the U.S. government, which is the “largest single donor” of “net official development assistance (ODA)” (OECD 2014) and the largest bilateral ODA donor in sub-Saharan Africa (Moss 2011: 125). Rajiv Chandrasekaran made thirteen field trips to Afghanistan between early 2009 and mid-2011 “to observe the war [President Obama] had inherited” (2012: 10). In Chandrasekaran’s account, “cash-burning” (195) was a prominent feature of USAID’s work in Afghanistan. One result was that “USAID officials assiduously tracked their ‘burn rate’” (198). The pressure to blaze through money

had many consequences, including a reliance on quick-response, high-cost projects. To spend so much money fast, “most of the new work would have to go to giant American development contractors that could employ lots of people and spend lots of money quickly. . . . A senior USAID official told me that security, management, and [contractor] overhead costs had grown to almost 70 percent of the value of most contracts by late 2010. That meant only 30 cents on the dollar was going to help the Afghans” (198).

The reference to security costs is worthy of reflection. Conducting development programs in or near war zones is usually difficult and dangerous, and Chandrasekaran notes that hiring private security details “sucked up a large portion of the reconstruction budget” (2012: 198). Yet the high cost for security probably was connected to the insertion of large amounts of resources into unstable areas. Such development investments run the risk of becoming magnets that attract fighting forces to them. A related challenge is that spending large amounts of money swiftly “inevitably led to dubious projects and waste” (194). One example concerns the work of an agricultural voucher program (called AVIPA) that had to spend US\$300 million in a single year. The USAID contractor for AVIPA argued that AVIPA was “effective” because it “had provided 5.4 million days of labor to unemployed men and generated \$200 million in additional income for farmers across the south” (193–194). Although AVIPA “seemed to be a wonder drug,” Chandrasekaran found that it “was too focused on immediate gratification. It was doing little to build an agricultural economy that would generate lasting income” for farmers. Two Western civilians working in the district predicted that it “would face a steep decline” after AVIPA ended (192). One outcome of the pressure to demonstrate a high burn rate was the practice of giving money to farmers “to do what they had previously done for free” (that is, dredging irrigation waterways). A USAID official was particularly concerned that the program was promoting a “culture of dependency” and “destroying the social fabric” (196).

Aid donors and practitioners often call those who receive aid “beneficiaries.” The picture Chandrasekaran paints is one in which so-called beneficiaries in Afghanistan had little input in the development work that was being done. The underlying realities he reports—about sequestered foreign aid officials under pressure to spend loads of money fast and promote any signs of success—align with the findings of a second journalist, David Rohde. Rohde’s reporting draws from field trips between 2001 and 2012 to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and eventually, countries across the Middle East. He also provides useful context on the practice of international aid in Washington,

D.C. The “privatization of government services” began at roughly the same time that SAP and neoliberalism were taking hold: when Ronald Reagan was president (1981–1988). The prominence of privatization and for-profit contractors extended across the 1990s as well, under the administrations of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton (Rohde 2013: 10). Then the situation exploded. “Between 2001 and 2010,” Rohde reports, “[the U.S.] Congress doubled [USAID’s] budget but cut staffing by 30 percent” (159). In response, “overwhelmed USAID officials bundled contracts together, creating enormous contracts that could be implemented only by large contractors” (12).

In theory, Rohde explains, the rationale for contracting was straightforward: it “created competition between firms that saved taxpayers money, slowed the growth of the federal work force, and provided better services.” Contractors also could be hired and let go expeditiously (2013: 10).²⁹ The downsides were considerable as well. Rohde found that “Afghans loathed foreign contractors,” citing studies “showing that 40 percent of foreign aid eventually returned to donor countries in the form of contractor profits.” Contracting also inspired the impression that the “high overhead and expense rates” of contractors was a form of American corruption (11).³⁰ The florescence of private development firms in the Washington, D.C., area is one result of “a broad, long-term shift of money, talent, and authority from the public sector to the private sector” (156).³¹

One of Rhode’s conclusions is that USAID has had no chance to successfully deliver development and reconstruction work in Afghanistan and across the Middle East. Although he does not blame the private sector for “what it does best: finding innovative ways to make money” (2013: 163), Rhode considers contractors to be contributors to “a disjointed, wasteful, and largely failed civilian effort” (xvii). Yet Rhode also asserts that much international aid is politicized. For example, presidential administrations may want “high-visibility infrastructure projects,” while politicians in the U.S. Congress create “their own aid programs, some of which were clearly about currying favor with their own constituents instead of people in the target country” (such as Egypt) (136). Rohde advocates for a strengthening of the public sector because “we need a government that is both effective and efficient. Currently, we have neither” in Washington, D.C. (163). Like Easterly and Sachs, he urges that aid should not support “kleptocratic regimes” or “increasingly authoritarian rulers” but instead should reduce aid levels to such states and filter aid to “train technocrats, civil society activists, and entrepreneurs over the long term” (168). While such recommendations are certainly worthy of

consideration, they constitute yet another indication of how the priorities and voices of the marginalized (including youth: like Africa, the Middle East has an exceptionally large youth population) remain largely overlooked.

WHAT CAN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTE?

One of Paul Collier's hallmarks is making broad, encompassing statements. He backs them up with quantitative data, and he contends that his approach is spot-on. In one book, he states that his ideas "are all founded on statistical research" (2009: 235). In another, he predicts that "I am going to take you beyond images. Sometimes I am going to smash them. And my image smasher is statistical evidence" (2007: xii). Some of the explanations that Collier provides for statistical correlations do not seem to be informed by the sort of context-specific realities that solid qualitative research can reveal. Take, for example, his explanation for the finding that "low income and slow growth make a country prone to civil war." To explain why civil wars so often emerge in countries with dire economic conditions, Collier states that "there could be many explanations." Then he details his "guess": "it is at least in part because low income means poverty, and low growth means hopelessness. Young men, who are the recruits for rebel armies, come pretty cheap in an environment of hopeless poverty. Life itself is cheap, and joining a rebel movement gives these young men a small chance of riches" (2007: 20). The assertions that (1) low economic growth equates with despair; (2) life has a low value in such environments; and (3) desperately poor young men join rebel movements to get rich are conjectures that mix theorizing with limited supporting data.³² If what Collier says were true, than it would be hard to explain why most youth resist joining rebel groups and why many who fight must be abducted first.

There are qualitative research studies that address why some males and females join rebel groups. One such study, by Vlassenroot and Van Acker, addresses male youth exclusively, examining those who joined Mayi-Mayi rebel groups in eastern DRC. The researchers found that the main motivation for joining the groups was that they provided "an alternative to the existing patrimonial social order" and a means to counteract "failing state institutions" (2001: 59). Instead of accepting a low rung in society with little available support, some male youth joined Mayi-Mayi groups because they represented "experiments with more egalitarian forms of social organisation for self-help and protection, with violence as the main mode of discourse" (58). The Mayi-Mayi thus created "a rationality of its own" that was borne

of their “rejection of the going institutional order.” This rationality allowed them to seek enrichment by, among other activities, building and exploiting “clandestine trade networks,” which, as detailed earlier, is a common means for accessing wealth in war zones (59). The tendency is not specific to militarized male youth.

The contrast between Collier’s views of male youth in war zones and an example of qualitative field research on the subject throws sharp light on a crucial weakness in the development and reconstruction enterprise. For the most part, male youth are thought to play a potentially destructive role in development (unless they are employed in proper jobs), while female youth are a low-priority concern. Collier does not hide his distaste for adolescent boys and male youth of the bottom billion, particularly those caught up in war. An illuminating description concerns the Revolutionary United Front’s recruits, located in the “poor and miserable country” of Sierra Leone, whom he considers “teenage drug addicts, easily controlled and not excessively inhibited by moral scruples” (2007: 25). Whether one presumes that wars spawn wild male youth or male youth fuel savage wars, the same damaging and incorrect stereotype informs both distorted viewpoints: male youth are inherently dangerous. Sachs also views unemployed youth as a potential threat. Citing two quantitative studies highlighting correlations between youth bulge populations and political violence, he stresses that “unemployed young men become prime fodder for militias, raiding parties, terrorist groups, and armies” (2008: 199). As reviewed in chapter 1, although some male youth enter into violent activities, most don’t. It is possible that youth have good reasons to resist the economic, political, and cultural systems affecting their lives. They also may have few or no viable venues to express their views. Such concerns are unlikely to be unearthed by quantitative research.

It has proven difficult for the views and priorities of youth—particularly those of marginalized youth majorities—to gain much influence over development policies and practices. On the contrary, international development analysis may rely on measures that underrepresent critical population groups such as youth. Many youth may not reside in places that quantitative researchers and their enumerators define as households. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs highlighted what can result: “Continued reliance on household surveys to determine who is living in poverty will perpetuate the bias against youth. Household surveys usually focus on easily enumerated households identified by a dwelling and a family. Young people are likely to be underrepresented in such settings if they

have left the parental home and are in precarious circumstances, which often includes residence in temporary lodgings or even being without any accommodation at all” (2004: 90).

A second way in which quantitative research inadvertently can underrepresent youth populations is urban population data. Significant proportions of urban residents may not officially exist if they live in illegal dwellings in informal settlements. This is no small concern: perhaps one billion people live in informal urban settlements, and somewhere between a third and two-thirds of the populations of many cities reside there. In Africa and elsewhere, many of those living in such settlements are likely to be youth, who may not be counted in city surveys without legal residence (Human Settlements Group 2012:1). While there are methods for estimating the size of informal settlements, it is also the case that lower urban population figures can help limit the attention paid to city dwellers in favor of rural areas—even in countries where rural-urban migration rates are high.

A third quantitative research limitation is more straightforward. Quantitative data gathering tends to focus on things that are easy to count. Proportions, figures, statistics, correlations, measures, metrics, and indicators are essential ingredients in much of today’s development work. They provide evidence of problems that should be addressed and determine the effectiveness of initiatives that tackle them. Once the various numerics are produced, they can be difficult to question, as they seem factual and correct. As suggested by Natsios’s observations earlier in this chapter, the emphasis on the quantifiable in international development appears to be long-standing. It is reflected in Uvin’s assessment, in his 1998 book on international development and genocide in Rwanda, that “plot sizes, crop distributions, coffee revenues, numbers of children, and the like” are “the things that the aid system is interested in measuring” (1998: 9). His review of “grey literature emanating primarily from the [international] aid system” (8) also uncovered “almost no information on what people think, feel, hope for, believe in, dislike, or dream of; their social relations and conflicts; their perceptions of development, the state, or the aid system; or their resources, networks, capacities, or aspirations” (9). These dimensions of people’s lives are the sort that qualitative techniques are equipped to investigate.

Research for this book points to a strong reliance on quantitative data in international development practice and policy making. Youth in war and postwar Africa, whose lives, perspectives, and priorities are frequently unknown or misunderstood, underscore the need to integrate qualitative

approaches and data much more deeply into development work. Finding a balance between the quantitative and the qualitative is bound to be challenging in part because, as Brannen observes, there are “misconceptions about the ‘other’” (2005: 6–7). On the one hand, quantitative researchers view the work of their qualitative counterparts as “too context specific.” They also consider their samples to be “unrepresentative.” On the other hand, “qualitative researchers view quantitative research as overly simplistic, decontextualised, reductionist in terms of its generalisations, and failing to capture the meanings that actors attach to their lives and circumstances” (7). A second reason emerges from established practice, as the current orientation of development work is, emphatically, on quantitative methods, products, and specialists. However, realizing “the weakness of relying too much on one kind of research” (Shepler 2014: 162) and developing a balance between quantitative and qualitative research methods is required. As with qualitative research and other social science disciplines, there are limits to and gaps in the information and analyses that quantitative approaches and the exceptionally influential views of development economists (whose analysis normally draws heavily from quantitative information) can provide.³³ The influence of economists and economic analysis over international development policy and practice is suggested by Uvin’s assessment that “the language of the dominant ideology” in the field is “*economism*” (2004: 126; emphasis in original). Far more complementarity is required to understand and respond to development challenges and ordinary lives more effectively.

The results of two research efforts highlight the capacity for qualitative approaches to reveal vital realities on the ground. Both examine unintended consequences of neoliberal economic policies, which continue to be applied in developing countries whether they are war affected or not. One study looked explicitly at the impact of structural adjustment reforms on African urban youth. Nigeria implemented SAP in 1986, which Ya’u found to have “engendered a growing impoverishment of greater sections of the Nigerian society” (2000: 161). Ya’u highlights one way in which young people coped with the increased hardship that followed in SAP’s wake. Using the northern city of Kano as his field site, Ya’u found that Yandaba groups, or bands, typically consisted of adolescent males between ages ten and twenty in urban neighborhoods. Before SAP was introduced, he found that such groups helped their members “to acquire the values and skills the society expected them to have” and helped to “prepare them for an acceptable adulthood.” They were also, Ya’u argues, “harmless” providers of social services (164). That changed in

SAP's wake, when "the collapse of social services and [the] inability of young people to secure . . . legitimate means of livelihood" (171–172) led some desperate youth to join Yandaba groups to survive, sometimes through criminal means (172). The Yandaba evolved into groups that included boys as young as eight and adult men as old as thirty-five who "mostly live on the fringe of the society in secluded places," have "a deep aversion to formal authorities," have adopted "a street culture of using drugs, gambling and sex," and feature "persons who are deeply alienated from their society," including some who have "psychologically troubled minds" (166, 167). Significantly, females both entered formally male-only Yandaba groups and formed complementary Yandaba groups consisting of "young unmarried girls" (166). Ya'u asserts that "girls are drawn into the fold because SAP has affected them" in two ways. First, "their parents cannot afford the cost of educating them." Second, marriage prospects "have become precarious," since male youth "cannot afford to marry as before" (173).

Ya'u concludes that Nigeria's SAP-induced economic crisis helped transform "a portion of the non-violent, harmless adolescence groups that serve as a means of socialisation into adulthood into violent gangs of disillusioned youth who are ready to kill in order to survive" (2000: 178). Although Yandaba have managed to retain some credibility within communities, since members often volunteer to protect communities and perform "communal works," their members also constitute "an army for anyone who can afford them" (176, 178). Some politicians, for example, employ Yandaba members to harass, intimidate, terrorize, and create confusion in ways that might help them win elections. Yandaba can also be hired to stop elections "if their sponsors cannot win either cleanly or through rigging" (176).

A second qualitative research endeavor investigated a foundation of neoliberal policy in urban Africa: the transfer of service provision from the government to private companies. Myers tracked garbage removal in several African cities, investigating what happened when citizens had to pay to have their garbage removed. He found that "those who can pay for waste services sometimes receive them" while "virtually everyone else is out of luck, choking on their own burning waste" (2005: 140). As a result of this, "large numbers of poor people suffer and die from easily preventable diseases" (141). Myers's research and conclusions are an indictment of what he calls "neoliberal triumphalism" (142) and its deleterious impact on the lives of ordinary African urbanites.³⁴

Addressing poverty is an aim of many international aid agencies. The

World Bank, for example, “has two ambitious goals: End extreme poverty within a generation and boost shared prosperity” (2013a). The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DfID) “leads the UK’s work to end extreme poverty” (2013). “The overall target of Sweden’s development assistance,” the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency explains, “is to ensure that those in poverty have the ability to improve their living conditions” (2013). One function of the accent on quantification in much development work is, effectively, to increase the distance between the poor and those who seek to aid them by reducing poor people’s lives and needs to numbers.

The two cases outlined here demonstrate how qualitative research can help to rectify this trend. Myers’s on-the-ground research sheds light on how privatization may exacerbate social and economic inequalities and negatively affect poor people. Ya’u’s research suggests that neoliberal policies may aggravate hardship and unemployment, make the attainment of adulthood much more difficult, and help create a rationale for youth violence and law breaking. Instead of highlighting statistical analyses and correlations that envision (mainly male) youth as an employment and violence problem, this sort of qualitative research brings an alternative picture into view, one in which neoliberal policies unintentionally may set the stage for social discord, alienation, resistance, criminality, and violence. The textured, personalized realities that qualitative research can provide, exemplified here by Myers and Ya’u, balance the broader analysis that is a staple of quantitative research. Of course, there is nothing new in stating such complementarity in the abstract: the expanding use of mixed methods research, which integrates quantitative and qualitative techniques, underscores the essential contributions of both approaches. Fielding maintains that “the really compelling argument for mixed methods designs remains their benefits for sophisticated analytical conceptualization.” He adds that “it is clear that both are essential” (2012: 125). What matters to this discussion is the utility of solid qualitative research, in either standalone or mixed method formats, in helping to formulate and interrogate effective and appropriate development policies and activities.

Part 1 of this chapter has highlighted how conventional analyses of development and postwar reconstruction often overlook the conditions youth face and the possibility that neoliberal development and postwar economic policies inadvertently may make matters worse for ordinary youth and other citizens. Underlying realities may go unrecorded, information drawn from

qualitative research may play a subordinate role, and significant population groups, such as female youth, may fall from view. In addition, some analysts draw on shopworn, mechanistic explanations to characterize male youth as innately violent and threats to peace and development. The picture of development aid that emerges suggests that responding to the stated priorities of ordinary people and providing accurate assessments of impact remain considerable challenges. Drawing from the insights of a range of practitioners, part 2 aims to probe these general concerns, as well as those relating more explicitly to youth in development practice, more deeply.

Part Two: Gaps and Constraints

The architecture of international development features seven “major sector disciplines.” They are “international health, agriculture, economic (both macro and micro) growth, humanitarian relief, environment, infrastructure, and education” (Natsios 2010: 3). This architecture frames the articulation of priorities, sets parameters for policy development and assessments of need, and shapes decisions on where aid will go and how it will be used. Donor, UN, and NGO officials routinely refer to this orientation as “stovepiping,” with each sector a stovepipe (an equivalent metaphor set features siloing and silos). Gender and youth are often viewed as “cross-cutting issues” in development agencies that somehow move across the established sectors to weave their concerns into and among sectoral efforts. African governments, for their part, usually have ministries for youth and gender. But reflecting the preferences of their benefactors, these ministries tend to be significantly weaker than most other ministries. Defense, interior, and finance ministries frequently are high-status ministries, followed by influential line ministries like transport, agriculture, education, and health. Most ministries at these two levels align fairly easily with the structures, priorities, and stovepipes of international donor agencies. Ministries on the lowest rung, in terms of influence and budget size, also often lack alignment or much influence with international actors. This is the level that tends to include youth and gender.

Donor officials, together with experts on development, youth, and evaluation, had much to share about the general structure and expression of international aid and the role youth plays within it. They answered questions about the situation of youth in Africa and in the developing world, the strengths and weaknesses of African government and international agency responses

to development challenges generally and youth challenges specifically, and what might be done to enhance responses to these challenges. The main themes emerging from my interviews with the twenty-eight officials and experts, supplemented with relevant commentary by donor and NGO officials at three public events, are detailed in the remainder of this chapter.

ASSESSING GENERAL TRENDS

The Dominance of Stovepiping

The interview data strongly suggests that international aid is powerfully oriented toward funneling money through sectoral stovepipes (or silos). A veteran donor official summed up the prevailing accent of her agency's work in the following way: "We talk silos." Another explained that "we have fragmented, siloed, sector-based programs." Development work "is done in specific sectors to reach sector-based goals." This orientation acts as a lens for interpreting development problems and solutions. As a third donor official explained, "We've got all these sectors, that's how we work." How this plays out for her colleagues in developing country offices underscores how sectoral thinking can narrow views and understandings sharply. "When you arrive in a country, for example as a health sector advisor, you focus on health issues." The resulting mind-set is to think about your sector "rather than looking at the population." With resignation, the official added that changing this way of working is "hard to do." A development expert added that "sectors are in [developing country] governments, too." The expert explained, "When you work with governments, budgets fall into ministries." The money that falls into powerful ministries is an expression of what the expert termed the "stovepipe dynamic." International agencies and developing country governments share a similar sectoral orientation.

Youth typically get lost in the shuffle when siloing or stovepiping is the organizing principle. For one thing, it may not be clear how many youth get into sectoral programs. To determine such figures, a veteran development expert explained, "You have to look at the ages of beneficiaries." "Do youth gain less access to agricultural supports or credits? I don't know," the official confessed. "My sense is that youth don't receive much aid" in such programs because "there's no systemic monitoring of age groups, of which people actually benefit." An official from a Western bilateral donor agency tracked a similar result within her organization. While officials may presume that youth are already included in sector-driven initiatives, "we're not sure if we're reaching youth" because the statistical evidence does not exist. "We need to

get a better understanding of who we're reaching," the official explained. "We don't really know" because "we disaggregate [program beneficiaries] by gender but not by age." In addition, the official noted a growing sense at her agency that many members of "the youth bulge are not being reached." As a result, "we're beginning to realize that there's a huge exclusion" of youth from the agency's programs.

A second way in which youth go unnoticed is counterintuitive. Youth populations in developing countries are often so big that they undercut rationales for according them special attention. The reason, a high-ranking donor official explained, is that youth "are becoming omnipresent in all development work—in mission activities and in multilateral and bilateral donor objectives." As a result, it's "almost counterproductive" to remind people that they need to work with youth. Given the immensity of youth populations in most nations where donors operate, it follows that sector-driven initiatives necessarily and unavoidably include many youth in their activities. "Since people say, 'We're already doing youth,'" the official observed, "there's no leadership" in donor agencies on youth concerns. "People aren't really talking about youth because everybody's [already] doing it." In a sense, the ubiquity of youth ironically can fuel their marginalization.

Large youth cohorts create handy opportunities for implementers too. A youth expert related how international NGOs may "see youth as a means to help them address their greater goal, mission or agenda." Similar to the approach reported by donor officials, their orientation is "to see things through the lens of a particular silo. So if your organization's main mission is to address HIV/AIDS, and you see the highest incidence [of HIV/AIDS] in female youth, then suddenly you're interested in female youth." However, this interest in youth is transitory, as it is "mainly to help your NGO achieve its mission." In the expert's view, ultimately "the NGO may not be interested in improving young people's health." More important are measurements of program concerns like HIV/AIDS prevalence. In this way of thinking, the expert concluded, "when youth opt out your program, they don't exist." In short, when youth exit a program, their contribution to program success evaporates.

Competition with Gender

The notion that the omnipresence of youth undermines their importance is reflected in a common donor agency device for raising the awareness of youth issues. In theory, making youth a cross-sectoral concern allows youth issues to thread their way through and among the sectoral stovepipes to influence

action. In practice, however, officials with youth expertise working in different bilateral donor agencies explained that youth issues have diminished profiles partly because they compete with a second and far more established cross-sectoral category—gender. One official explained that, in her agency, “youth and gender are the two populations that are cross-cutting.” However, the official added that making progress on either front was “hard to do when the [donor] agencies are so stovepiped.” A second official explained that “a donor agency is like a tanker—they’re not easy to turn around.” The official added that her agency features multidisciplinary teams. “But because we’re very busy and work very hard, we rely on our own expertise.” The result is that “issues that cut across sectors [like youth and gender] don’t get much attention.” The official set a very low bar for progress on youth work. “We’ve got all these sectors,” the official stated, “that’s how we work. But how can we work between sectors to at least not do any harm to youth?” Even getting this done is made more difficult because, in line with the first donor official’s views, “youth comes in second behind gender in terms of cross-cutting issues.”

The positioning of youth behind or beneath gender is worthy of reflection. Every person has a gender and every youth is male or female. Such obvious facts should imply that gender and youth, as concepts and in practice, largely intersect: all youth should be part of the gender field and many in the gender field should be youth. But in the development world, they do not: as indicated in chapter 1, gender and youth generally delineate separate population groups. Comments from officials and experts working in the field of development attest to this perverse construction of reality. In the development world, “youth means young men and gender means women and girls,” a donor official succinctly stated. “Why do we think that these two categories go together? There’s no overlap.” Another donor official suggested that a small amount of overlay existed. “Youth are those ages 10–35 and are mostly male, because they’re easier to reach.” Meanwhile, “women and gender are women of reproductive age: those ages 15–49.” The official added her belief that “the women’s movement and the gender movement are the same thing” and that it was “very easy for adolescent girls to be left by the wayside if you’re focused on youth and women.”

The idea that adolescent girls, and female youth more generally, are mostly forgotten was a view that others expressed about the youth category. A donor official noted that when he thinks of youth, “I tend to think about male youth rather than female youth.” The official suspected that the reason for this was “because male youth are threatening,” an impression that also

“scares the elites” in developing countries. “Youth comes up as a category for dangerous young men,” a veteran youth expert noted. “If you’re focused on dangerous male youth, then call it a youth program,” the official continued. The title is misleading if it refers to anyone else.

A Fixation on Numbers

An elemental characteristic of the international aid world is the extraordinary value accorded to countable figures and statistics—what is popularly known as “numbers.” While the accent on the quantitative figured prominently in part 1 of this chapter, its importance to the practice of development is so expansive that I will note it here and again in the discussion of evaluation at the end of this chapter, since numbers also have become the most distinctive and revealing feature of evaluation work today. In evaluation parlance, the crucial numbers are connected to program or project indicators: what an evaluation expert called “signs of change” that can transform evaluations into “counting exercises.” In today’s pressurized, politicized world of international aid, these countable aspects of a development activity can determine whether it will be viewed as a success or as a failure.

None of the officials who remarked on the importance of statistical data had a positive view of it. To one donor official, it all began with economists, who “dominate” his agency and “are uncomfortable with things you can’t measure.” Regarding youth, the official highlighted the limitation of this approach by commenting that “we haven’t explored how to measure what youth are doing.” Another donor official noted how the “pressure to reach large numbers of people” leads to “reaching for the most people with the least amount of funds. So there’s a focus on quick wins instead of trying to reach those most in need.” Such results are best represented, in the view of an experienced evaluator, with “numbers and indicators.” Using training programs as an example, the evaluator boiled down the purpose of such work as, “For a set amount of money, we trained so many thousand people.” A UN official cautioned that while “donors need indicators that are all about counting, we’re relying on statistics that don’t reflect what youth want.”³⁵ “In the end,” the official continued, what matters is the answer to the following question: “What can I tell my donor government about what we’ve achieved?” Donors “don’t want to hear [about] things like human rights,” the official insisted. They seek quantitative data, even if, in the official’s view, “there’s too much focus on it.” The consequence for youth work, a veteran international NGO official observed, is that implementing agencies “will go for quantity over

quality [that is, emphasizing the number of youth in a program instead of program excellence] because that's the way you win contracts. Unless there's a specific focus on a specific part of the youth population, you have to think about numbers."

It would be difficult to find a part of the development world where numbers are accorded a higher value than USAID and its recipient organizations. It is not an aspect of development work in Washington, D.C., that officials try to conceal. The political imperative makes this unnecessary: legislators in Congress, who have the power to influence strongly the government's international aid budget, require statistical signs that current aid investments are worthwhile. An attendant concern is the influential role that the Department of State plays in USAID's affairs. An evaluation expert put the situation bluntly: "There's a fear that State will get USAID's money." Because of the twin pressures from Congress and the State Department, a high-ranking USAID official commented, "We in USAID are, for political reasons, in need of numbers to justify our programs. So we seek quantitative data." A colleague was just as candid. "We're all about hitting the biggest swath of numbers that we can," he stated. "We're very numbers-oriented. We're out to have quantifiable outputs to programs so that we can defend our expenditures in an era of tight resources." Compared to other bilateral donors, another USAID official contended, "the U.S. government is very constrained by politics." As a result, "we're not serving people on the ground." Instead, "USAID serves Congress absolutely. Everything has to go through Capitol Hill." Similar to the perspective shared by Natsios earlier in this chapter, the official summed up the situation by saying, "We serve in an extraordinarily regulatory framework." All of this regulation and control led a fourth official to remark that "we need numbers, numbers, numbers at USAID."

Given this strikingly narrow imperative, the official's next comment was revealing. "Data is not neutral," the official warned. "It can be manipulated." In effect, the politicization of development can transform its work into a kind of campaign. A common aside from development practitioners concerns the need to submit upbeat stories of program successes to donor agencies, even when the stories promote a distorted impression of realities on the ground. But if success is mandatory, then it must be demonstrated and publicized.

Pressures

Donor officials collectively depict a world where pressures are outsized and time is at a premium. Reflective of this are the following comments from one

harried official. “It’s not that we don’t care,” the official confessed. “It’s just that there are so many important things to be done. I want to do a good job but I have so little time.” The official then shared the official’s work philosophy: “You have to take every opportunity to do good. Obviously, you might fail ninety-nine percent of the time. But if you don’t try, you won’t have a chance to gain that one percent of extraordinary success.” Holding out for slight chances of success seemed difficult for other officials to do. As another committed donor official commented, “I’m overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done.” A third official put the problem down to limits on what is even possible. “There are more and more constraints on what you can do in a [developing] country,” the official explained. “So you get out of the office less often and out of the [capital] city less often.”

Getting out of the office in developing countries appears to be increasingly difficult. A conspicuous theme arising from conversations with high-level international development workers is how time for reflection is either tight or nonexistent. Long workdays are routinely devoted to meetings and conference calls, with the occasional workshop, conference, or training thrown in. Getting into the office early is usually crucial, since e-mails from the home office tend to back up overnight. A donor official in Kigali told me how he would get into the office by 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. every morning just to read and reply to perhaps 250 e-mails from his headquarter office before meetings started at 9:00 a.m. Another international agency official related how anxiety would build if a meeting extended beyond two hours, since 120 minutes typically equated with seventy or so new e-mails requiring review and response. A third stated how she could not travel to areas where cell phone reception was poor, as it undercut her ability to keep up with e-mail traffic. Combine masses of e-mails with the dense stream of consultations and gatherings demanding preparation, attendance, and follow-up, together with the ongoing need to align in-country efforts with headquarters mandates, donor objectives, Millennium Development Goals, sectoral requirements, evaluation indicators, and national government policies and personalities, and one can see how getting out of the office and into “the field” may be close to unworkable, if not plainly beyond the pale of possibility.

Another pressure that bears down on at least some donor officials—in headquarters offices and developing country capitals alike—is a straightforward one: spending money. Comments on the subject echoed Chandrasekaran’s depiction of burn rates in Afghanistan. “There’s a donor [official] I’m working with,” an evaluation expert related. “When I asked about the agency’s goal, the

official answered, 'my personal goal is: spend.' They create annual spending plans. The purpose is to obligate all the funds." A donor official contributed a corresponding concern. In addition to "a pressure to spend money quickly," the official explained that "there's also pressure to reach large numbers of people. So [implementing] organizations reach those who are easiest to reach rather than those with the greatest need." This state of affairs summoned the following from a second donor official: "We don't need more money. We need to be smarter and more effective with the money we have."

An outcome of pressures and expectations on donor officials is that their work has a directive tinge to it. "Donors are too important," an NGO official complained. "It's a very authoritarian environment." What this can promote, the official added, is fear. "We're afraid of donors because they set the priorities. They decide what [implementing] agencies will do." A youth expert contended that "the donors have a kind of benevolent totalitarian mind-set." Depictions of how pressures on donor officials and implementing agencies funneled their way to youth were not encouraging. A youth expert believed that donor agencies "are not interested in the world as it is for youth but in the world as it should be, and how youth fit into that world." A development expert concurred. "Donor agencies and governments aren't asking what youth need," the expert explained. "They don't ask what's appropriate for youth. You offer them what's on offer." Some donor officials agreed with this view, reflecting just how contained they are by rigid work environments. One stated the situation succinctly: "Donor priorities are not aligned with the lived realities of youth on the ground." Another was more forceful: "If I'm a youth, my sense is that all these agencies and governments don't get it. They don't know what we want, they don't know what we need, they haven't asked us. I'd bet, in some places, they don't care." Others shared this perspective. "Nothing we're doing is seriously addressing youth issues," a development expert noted. "My guess is that there's no systemic approach to youth anywhere," a donor official reflected. "We treat youth as beneficiaries, not participants," added another. In a way, these gathered views, expressed with either resignation or frustration by people from different points along the development enterprise continuum, together create a hopeful sentiment. They collectively delineate the same problem.

The Implications of Youth Engagement

Suggestions of disconnection between development work and youth lives dovetailed in the interview data with calls for international development

agencies and developing country governments to listen to youth. The following comment from a development expert reflects this sentiment. “I despair of trying to get politicians and senior [development agency] bureaucrats to seriously hear and incorporate youth voices,” he said. “They tend to be token efforts and window dressing in the West and elsewhere. I haven’t seen anything that’s terribly effective.” A youth expert directed his attention at donor officials, who “see themselves as champions of youth but don’t listen to them.” A second youth expert related, “Everywhere youth say, ‘No one takes us seriously.’ Youth are just told what to do.” Should youth dare to “show any original ideas, they’re blamed for being globalized and disrespectful to elders.”

Indeed, many of those whom I interviewed perceived relations between youth and powerful adults (in the form of community elders and government and international agency officials) as distant and strained. “Young people don’t believe that the older generation—government officials and elders—are working for the interest of all, and certainly not in their interest,” a veteran youth expert explained. “Too many governments are more concerned with retaining power than expanding government services” to youth and others, a donor official stated. “Governments and development agencies are behaving like elders,” a youth expert declared. The message they collectively relay to youth is, “We know what’s best for you and you better be grateful. They share the view that youth are troublesome.” The tendency for African government officials to be directive toward youth and not listen to their views, as noted in chapter 1, supports this assessment. Interactions with youth and government officials in many war-affected African countries also underscored the corresponding proclivity for officials to believe that youth refuse to follow their directions because they are stubborn and undereducated. Officials expressing the possibility that youth may have valid reasons to resist their commands proved rare.³⁶

If youth in war-affected African states (and elsewhere) *were* listened to, they might ask challenging questions. A youth expert explained that youth might ask “whether there’s nepotism in the development agency system. They know who is being favored [in securing agency jobs], who is a relative of someone else.” Youth might also inquire about the nature of international agency relations with national governments. “Youth leaders always ask, ‘How can you justify working with corrupt governments?’” a donor official said. In a similar vein, an NGO official recalled that a youth leader asked her about the program that her agency was carrying out in Sierra Leone. The youth leader asked her, “Why are we doing that program when it supports

an unpopular government?” Providing easy answers to such questions may be difficult to do, since, as one donor official explained, “You can’t say the government is corrupt and fundamentally flawed. You have to work with the existing government.” The direct nature of youth questions may leave African government officials reticent to engage with youth as well. An NGO official with extensive experience working on governance issues in Africa summed up the problem as follows. “Everybody’s political base has to include a lot of youth because they’re so much of the voting population,” the official explained. “Politicians should try to reach out to youth but they won’t do it. Many are older, urban, educated elites who see youth as a problem.”

These comments point to significant communication barriers between youth and many in their governments and in international agencies. They also suggest what authentic youth engagement and youth participation in decision making might reveal. Youth can be, in one youth expert’s words, “very direct” and likely to “call a spade a spade.” Small wonder, then, that some African politicians may prefer not to dialogue with young people and some international agency officials may prefer to limit interactions with them. This is no long-term answer, of course: enormous youth populations are not going away, nor is the need for outcast youth majorities in particular to be heard, accepted, and empowered.

WHEN AGENCIES TARGET YOUTH:

THE HIDDEN SIGNIFICANCE OF CLASS (AND GENDER)

The increase in attention paid to youth in development work is noteworthy and important, as it increases opportunities for addressing prominent youth priorities effectively. One purpose of this chapter has been to examine how youth and youth challenges are perceived. A shortfall in current perceptions of and responses to youth in international development is the tendency to overlook internal differentiation within huge youth cohorts. The following upbeat depiction of youth in postwar situations by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa illuminates the trend toward describing all youth as pretty much the same: “Young people are important actors in the rebuilding of tolerance and peace in communities after conflicts. They show incredible resilience in such situations, and during resettlement they often serve as the link between the new host community and their families. Hence nurturing their potential is of the utmost importance” (2011: 35). In conflict-affected contexts in Africa and elsewhere, and probably in most developing country contexts more broadly, immense populations often called

“young people” or “the youth” generally demonstrate tolerance, peacefulness, and resilience. But if an agency seeks to “nurture their potential,” figuring out where a youth program—that is, an initiative that specifically targets youth, as opposed to generalized, sector-based programs that merely include youth—might begin such a monumental task is unclear.³⁷

Many of the officials and experts whom I interviewed pointed out that homogenizing youth populations allows program officials and their local colleagues to pluck well-adjusted (and mostly male) youth from the masses for their programs without mentioning it. Some highlighted an underlying pressure on donors and implementing agencies to demonstrate success from the start of a program. As a result, a donor official explained that if a program “needs to show sustainability and traction,” then the implementing agency “will focus on middle-class youth,” as it is “the youth population that will give you good results in two years.” A second donor official concurred. “Those youth in the greatest need are not often reached.” In addition, “Youth programs almost always target male youth ages 25–35.”

Several officials reported that the interrelated pressures of demonstrating immediate success and reaching impressive numbers of people, noted earlier in part 2, directly affected program operations. Implementing agencies, the second donor official continued, “focus on their finances and meeting their quotas, even though this can limit their effectiveness.” The “pressure to spend money” and reach preset numbers of youth in a program are forces that an NGO official highlighted as well. “Programs focus on elite youth,” the official related, because “they’re easier to get.” For example, “If you’re trying to reach two thousand youth in eighteen months,” then early in the program cycle “you get youth that are easier to reach.” It’s a matter of expedience: “You have to show results [to the donor agency] every quarter. So you want to show you’ve done something in the first three months [of the program], not just that you hired staff and did some assessments. You need youth who are connected and easy to find for the program.” Well-connected youth might also be the only youth that a high-level official ever meets. As a donor official related, international officials interact with youth in “formal situations, like at school or in an existing community center. It’s more difficult to reach more vulnerable or disaffected, excluded youth, who are not in the formal sector, have no bank account and no mobile phone.” The official concluded by noting that “there are so many youth that we just don’t access.”

Some of those whom I interviewed explained that well-connected youth get into programs because community leaders and NGO officials with local

connections select youth they know as program participants. The NGO official detailed how this works: “How do you get access to the community? You talk to the elders. The elders help you find the youth. Those in youth groups are visible and they’re the ones doing things. Those youth are already connected.” The tendency for so-called community-based programs to allow local leaders to choose the youth who get into programs appeared to be common. A donor official conceded that “development agencies tend to make an effort to be more inclusive, but it’s hard. Even if you work through local community organizations, you rely on their networks.” The official concluded that “the youth in youth programs tend to be elites, often in capital cities.” Another donor official chimed in: “So many youth program participants are children of privilege. Those who benefit are establishment youth, who want to keep the status quo.”

To say that program practices always favor elite or better-off youth is incorrect, as there are many programs for specific youth subgroups (programming for former combatants is particularly common in war and post-war contexts). Yet reports of intentional favoritism in the selection of youth program participants and knowing acquiescence to nepotistic practices by local officials are disturbing. They also point to a dearth of strategic targeting that determines exactly who gets into programs. How will a program that will probably reach a miniscule proportion of a youth population make an impact, and with whom? Will exclusion from programs negatively affect those youth who are left out? Donor and implementing agency officials may neither raise these questions nor know their answers.

A complicating factor stems from the significance of personal networks in helping people secure employment. Reportedly, these networks “are the most common mechanism to search for jobs or to hire workers.” While some youth may have contacts that can help them get a job in the private sector, “those with weak social networks can be severely constrained in their choices” (Banerji et al. 2010: 23). Most marginalized youth are thus likely to have weak or no job networks in private sectors (which is one reason why so many end up working in informal sectors). The World Bank warns that “people may feel frustrated if they perceive that jobs are allocated on the basis of privilege and connections rather than merit and achievement” (2012b: 140).

With this in mind, an important question arises: what if a youth employment training program unintentionally fuels youth frustration by targeting favored or well-connected youth as participants? Four possible answers follow:

- First, donor and implementing agency officials (among others) may assess a youth employment program as successful if participants end up with the sort of job on which the program focused. It is thus likely that such a program would have successfully achieved a key indicator of success.
- Second, this indicator of program success may be misleading because employment training programs for youth may not, ultimately, determine who gets a job and who doesn't. The social networks of youth may factor much more significantly, particularly when private sector employment is the target. In such cases, elite youth are likely to have a decided advantage over their nonelite counterparts.
- Third, the program might be viewed widely as favoring the already favored. Marginalized youth who are desperate for job training would have lost out again to elite youth with connections. The program could have an even larger adverse impact on those who didn't get in if participants got jobs afterward.
- Fourth, donor and implementing agencies might be seen as publicly supporting nepotistic politicians and community leaders as well as social and economic inequality more generally.

The possibility that targeting elite, well-connected youth for programs fuels the frustration of youth who are left out has received little attention. On the other hand, a youth issue that has attracted considerable interest, particularly in fragile and war-affected states, is the perceived threat of frustrated, unemployed youth. Cramer's review of literature on this subject found "a very widespread view that youth unemployment is a key cause of insurgency or civil war" (2010: 1). Izzi details why youth unemployment in postwar states is a "particular concern for policymakers": because "if young people are idle and lack life prospects—so the mainstream argument goes—they will be significantly more vulnerable and thus likely to become involved in violence of various forms" (2013: 103). Izzi also notes that "while most statements are expressed in gender-neutral terms, *de facto* the emphasis is predominantly on young males, who are seen as prime candidates for recruitment in violence" (109).

It has proven difficult to substantiate the notion that unemployment causes or fuels violence. Cramer reviewed the data that backs up these claims and found that "the evidence is largely circumstantial" and "there are no obvious patterns linking unemployment and violent conflict" (2010: 16, 15). Mercy

Corps highlights “a growing body of evidence that finds no relationship between joblessness and a young person’s willingness to engage in, or support, political violence” (2015: 2). Significantly, Izzi points out an important distortion in scholarship on youth and violence: “it is mostly based on research and interviews with combatants or former combatants.” She argues that scholars often draw from this narrow information source to make conclusions about youth populations in general. Meanwhile, “factors in relation to the resilience of young people who did not engage in violence are rarely studied in any detail.” She concludes that “it remains unclear” whether differences in work conditions can explain which youth might participate in violence (2013: 110).

It has also proven difficult to establish whether youth employment programs in postwar contexts can decrease levels of unemployment or violence. “To date,” Izzi finds, “the evidence that donor-funded youth employment programmes can actually reduce unemployment . . . is flimsy at best” (2013: 108–109). Dupuy and Peters point to a reason why: the impact they make doesn’t last. Despite the fact that “there has been much focus” from NGOs, donor agencies, and the United Nations “on creating jobs and income-earning opportunities—particularly for young people—in post-conflict contexts,” it nonetheless is “extremely challenging to create the kind of long-term economic growth and job creation that people desire and need to lift themselves out of poverty.” The result is a boost in “jobs for some young people, but only on a short-term basis” (2010: 125).³⁸ Walton highlights “a widespread failure from donors to articulate clearly how youth employment projects contribute to armed violence reduction, peacebuilding or conflict prevention” (2010: 5). One reason for this, Izzi asserts, is that “‘youth employment for peacebuilding’ projects lack a clear theory of change” (2013: 113).

This returns us to the concern about which youth gain access to programs. Izzi’s research on youth employment for peacebuilding suggests that the issue may be viewed as unimportant, since the work is informed by “the idea that giving jobs to *some* young people will result in a decrease in the *overall* level of violence in society.” She found that “project documents typically speak of providing ‘young people’ with job opportunities, while skimming over the obvious, but essential, fact that only an extremely tiny fraction of young people actually benefit by any one project.” At the same time, she warns that if programs are perceived as “privileging certain groups of young people at the expense of others” the result “can unintentionally ‘do harm’ and become conflict-inducing” (2013: 111; emphasis in original). This would seem to be the

worst potential result of all: well-meaning programs for war-affected youth that, due to unfortunate decisions about the selection of youth participants, inadvertently fuel instability instead of peace.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A widely noted feature of youth programming in developing countries is the scarcity of quality evaluation data. “Despite the billions of dollars spent implementing youth livelihood programs,” Hempel and Fiala observe, “relatively few impact studies exist” (2012: 5). Many evaluations of youth employment projects fail to carry out two basic dimensions of evaluation work, Izzi notes. They “do not compare the target group [that is, the project participants] with an untreated control group [that is, youth not in the project but with profiles similar to the participants].” They also “do not follow the target group through for an extended period of time” (2013: 107). UNESCO’s 2012 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, which highlights the need for skills training for youth, states that “private organizations tend to make bold statements about the effectiveness of their programmes without providing sufficient information or adequate impact evaluations” (UNESCO 2012: 12). The situation is no better in war and postwar contexts. A youth program review found that “in general, the programs lacked baseline assessments or [had] conducted limited assessments.” The same review found that “the general trend among the programs and the indicators was that they lacked an evidence based foundation” (Center for Peace Building International 2008: 7, 8). An analysis of donor engagement in youth and livelihoods work in areas affected by conflicts and other crises found “limited evidence and lesson-learning on the impacts of youth-related programming” (McLean Hilker and Fraser 2012: 27).

These assessments of absent or inadequate evaluation documentation have been made while major development institutions assert their commitment to sound evaluation work. A sampling of relevant publications from major development aid institutions sheds light on how “sound evaluation” is largely defined: on the products of their initiatives. These products usually translate as some combination of outcomes, outputs, and results. For example, Australian Aid, the Australian government’s development aid agency, states that “to achieve the fundamental purpose of the Australian aid program—to help people overcome poverty— . . . Australia’s approach will be based on ‘concrete evidence of what works best on the ground to produce results’” (Office of Development Effectiveness 2012: 2). “For evaluation to serve the aim of

accountability,” a USAID document explains, “metrics should be matched to meaningful outputs and outcomes that are under the control or sphere of influence of the Agency” (USAID 2011: 3). The Canadian government has instituted an Aid Effectiveness Agenda, which “delivers results and demonstrates value for every dollar invested in international development” (Canadian International Development Agency 2012: 1). A World Bank publication emphasizes just how widespread this orientation is. “Within the development community there is a strong focus on *results*,” the document explains. “This helps explain the growing interest in M&E [monitoring and evaluation]” (2004b: 5; emphasis in original).

How can there be expanding monitoring and evaluation work when the general quality of this work, reportedly, is underwhelming? As the quotes from USAID and the Canadian International Development Agency documentation state emphatically, and as earlier commentary in this chapter illuminates, a large part of the answer lies in the need for implementers to account for what they do. Implementing agencies must prove that they spent donor funds wisely and productively, just as donor agencies must account for the funds they invest to the auditors, boards of governors, taxpayers, and politicians who assess their work. Accordingly, and as interviews with donor and implementing agency officials as well as youth, development, and evaluation experts indicate, justification is a central purpose of evaluative work. The defensive posture that many evaluations assume reflects two central findings from a conference on evaluations of peacebuilding work. First, there is “tension between accountability to donors and organizational learning within [implementing agencies].” The tilt toward accountability is illuminated by the following question that members of an implementing organization raised: “Even when [evaluation] methodologies were praised for their ability to generate learning, the question was often asked, ‘Would these results convince my donor?’” Second, it is informed by “power imbalances between donors and implementers” in which donors dominate (Blum and Kawano-Chiu 2012: 8, 9). At a second gathering, on work with youth in conflict-affected settings, a similar result surfaced: that “donors need to be persuaded to accept a wider frame of reference.” Participants recommended that “program learning and evaluation should be thought of as progressive and not as a pass-fail process” (Center for Peace Building International and Search for Common Ground 2011: 9). The pass-fail allusion refers to the need for implementers to gain approval from donors for the work that donors underwrite.

Because of such forces, the purpose of evaluation appears to have trans-

formed its practice. Evaluations that are oriented toward proving the value of funded activities may override or undercut their traditional function: to provide an unbiased assessment of the impact or merit of an initiative for its recipients. Bamberger characterizes the trend in the following way: “The majority of evaluation resources continue to be devoted to monitoring project implementation and to the production of immediate outputs. In contrast, very little attention and few resources are devoted to the systematic assessment of whether policies, programs, or projects achieve their intended impacts and benefits for the target populations” (2000: 96).³⁹ The assessment of Barakat, Chard, and Jones supports Bamberger’s characterization. “Aid evaluation, particularly in postwar contexts,” they write, “tends to be almost exclusively geared to the purposes of project accountability and performance” (2005: 831).

The heavy emphasis on accountability essentially reverses the focus of an evaluation from target populations to the donor or donors who authorized and funded the initiative. This presents a fundamental challenge for those concerned with humanitarian accountability, since “humanitarians do not take as their main goal profit maximization . . . but rather suffering alleviation and the care of others” (Everett and Friesen 2010: 469). Despite this imperative, Pérouse de Montclos states an important reminder simply: “NGOs and intergovernmental agencies” who carry out international humanitarian work “are assessed by their funders, not their beneficiaries” (2012: 154). One result is that evaluations tend to “rely on interviews with professional funders or operators” rather than “investigating the satisfaction of the so-called ‘beneficiaries’” (155). He adds that, in most cases, “their evaluation neglects field surveys, does not use opinion polls, passes over fundamental issues, and seldom tries to investigate the socioeconomic impact of relief” (154).

The changed orientation of evaluation work is reflected in the following passage from a World Bank publication. “Evaluations can provide a highly cost-effective way to improve the performance and impact of development policies, programs and projects,” the document states. But to do this, every evaluation first must meet three criteria: (1) they are conducted “at the right time” (the appropriate time frame is not defined); (2) “they focus on key issues of concern to policy makers and managers”; and (3) “the results are presented in a user-friendly format.” “Evaluations that fail these [three] criteria,” the document warns, “may produce no useful results—even when they are methodologically sound” (2004a: 5). Criterion number two makes it plain where the focus of evaluations must be: on the priorities of those

who design, manage, and are likely responsible for the initiatives under evaluation. The requirements of implementers and especially donors, not those of the recipients of initiatives, are the primary focus of most evaluations. In such an environment, it is not surprising that the nature of evaluations has shifted and their quality is so often viewed as suspect. Validation routinely supersedes impact assessment as the principal evaluation purpose.

The following example illustrates how the pronounced need to validate activities can play out. Across three years, I conducted six monitoring and evaluation field visits to two provinces in Burundi (Gitega and Ruyigi). The program I was assessing, I learned over time, stood out. It was a program that trained Burundians to resolve conflicts. It took place in an area where training programs of many kinds, conducted by many UN agencies and NGOs, either were underway or had taken place recently. The program I studied posted one trainer to each of the eighteen communes in the two provinces. Over approximately two years, each trainer conducted trainings and follow-up with eight separate groups of trainees. The eight groups were geographically distributed in a relatively balanced fashion. For instance, if a commune contained four zones (communes are administrative districts comprising smaller administrative locales called zones), then two training and follow-up activities would take place in each zone. To select the trainees for seven of the eight sessions, trainers had discussions with citizens of the geographic area where the next training and follow-up activity would take place. From these discussions, the trainers determined which local people had reputations as leaders. Then the trainers would invite the reputed leaders—adult men and women, female and male youth—to become trainees.

How were trainees from the eighth group selected? To explain the process, some background information is required. The commune administrator is the leading government authority in a Burundian commune. Several commune administrators whom I interviewed explained that a central function of their job is to make lists, such as lists identifying which people in the commune would receive assistance or material from a government, UN, or NGO initiative (such as the distribution of food, clothing, fertilizer, and so on). Another important type of list that commune administrators make, I learned, was for trainees. When a UN or NGO agency sought to train people in a commune, the commune administrator provided the list of candidates. Attending trainings awarded trainees with prestige and, in most cases, money (in the form of a *per diem*). In postwar Burundi, where desperate poverty was common and money was scarce, virtually everyone wanted to be a paid trainee. However,

many reported that only those close to the commune administrator got onto his trainee list. Yet I also gathered that the lists typically contained “categories” of leaders: women’s leaders, youth leaders, leaders of internally displaced persons, civil society leaders, government leaders, and so on. I further learned that it was common for a succession of international agencies to train the same group of elite, well-connected local leaders who were on the commune administrator’s trainee list. One commune administrator, for example, recalled how “the same people were trained twice, three times, four times.” Interviewing some of these trainees, it was apparent that most had failed to retain much of what they had learned. A revealing example of limited trainee retention came from the leader of one IDP group. He related that “I’ve been trained many times” (and thus pocketed every per diem payment) “because I always represent the IDPs” in his commune. He could neither recall all of the times he had been trained (“There have been so many trainings that I can’t remember”) nor what, specifically, he had learned.

The evaluation research revealed that such “overtrained” trainees generally retained few of the techniques featured in the conflict resolution training program I was evaluating. It also did not appear that many had applied the techniques to resolve conflicts afterward. Instead, the primary collective comment from the “overtrained” trainees was a complaint: the conflict resolution training program did not pay them per diem, as other training programs had. In contrast, retention and application levels were, in general, significantly higher among trainees who had never before attended a training. Indeed, the evaluation work revealed that “the largest proportion of the most committed . . . trainees are poor and reside in remote corners of their Communes” (Sommers 2006b: 27). It was not possible to gauge the impact of any of the other training programs that the “overtrained” trainees had attended. The reason was simple: officials of the relevant international agencies turned down my requests for copies of evaluation reports. In my experience, this is not unusual: evaluation reports often are not publicly available. However, commentary about training program evaluations from development agency officials suggested that the evaluation reports might have reported great success even if the actual impact was negligible. Another possibility was that training (and paying) the same cadre of local elites inadvertently exacerbated tensions between two kinds of rural Burundians: those living in what many called “favored zones” (including many of the “overtrained”) and those living in “neglected zones” (where the majority of committed trainees resided).⁴⁰

A common tool for evaluating training programs is the self-assessment

report (sometimes called “self-reported information”). Ordinarily trainees are asked to complete the form just before they leave their training program. A director of evaluation for one international NGO confessed, “We typically fall back on self-reported information. We know how to game the survey, so the answers align with the answers we seek.” Another international NGO official had a similar view. “I think we can ‘game the [evaluation] system’ with surveys,” the official stated. “The trainees want to please the teacher and tell us what we want to hear.” An experienced evaluator agreed, stating that evaluations of training activities “are effectively to satisfy the trainees. They measure the level of satisfaction of participants.” The evaluator considered reports based on this sort of data to be “simulated evaluations, not real evaluations.” In comments that echo findings about trainees from favored and neglected zones in Burundi, an NGO official explained why training programs for youth are so popular: “We think the youth need a lot of training—training is the UN and NGO comfort zone. They’ve been training youth for years. Some youth go from training to training, so they know how to work the system. In a lot of remote areas, trainings are useful. But the same youth in many places keep getting trained: those who live closer to urban areas and have at least gone to high school if they haven’t completed it.” The idea that program officials and participants alike knowingly “game” or “work” the system raises questions about the actual impact of many training initiatives. It also suggests that training the same people repeatedly can deliver the sort of upbeat results that donor and implementing agencies are under pressure to provide. At the same time, targeting people from remote or neglected locations, or those with low levels of educational accomplishment, just might produce credible as well as encouraging results.

The tension between quality and questionable evaluations was a prominent theme in my interviews with officials and experts. There was no doubt that concern over the state of evaluation ran deep. Officials and experts had little to say that was positive about the general state of evaluative work in the international development field. Some donor officials were surprisingly critical about evaluations generally and evaluations of youth programming work in particular. “We’re using youth as a means to an end,” one official cynically commented. “They’re a foil or a tool to achieve some outcome.” Strikingly, this was not a singular assessment. “We have a lot of youth interventions,” a second donor official said, “but we don’t know what difference they’re making. We need to know what the impact is.” A third donor official had this take on evaluation work: “All evaluations are, essentially, ‘Grade

your own homework and seek out evidence of your success.” “We haven’t done many youth program evaluations,” a fourth donor official stated. “Our agency’s overall evaluation standard has been less than par.” The official, who worked for one of the many donor agencies that routinely pronounce their commitment to quality evaluation work, concluded by saying that “there’s not a culture of evaluation” at the official’s agency. Although “evaluation is the flavor of the month,” a former donor official recalled, most monitoring and evaluation (M&E) work “is just whitewashing. As I look back on the M&E of programs I was involved with, it was pathetic.”

Experienced evaluators shared similar appraisals of evaluation and assessment work. According to one evaluator, the touchstone for discussing evaluation weaknesses was “the emphasis on numbers” (often expressed as indicators) that donor agencies demanded from their implementers: “Too often, you shape your evaluation design to suit the outcomes you seek. You measure things that are easily measured, and you do things that drive those measurements.” The evaluator recalled an experience of being part of an assessment mission with officials from an implementing agency. “I was astounded that [the agency officials] had their conclusions before asking the questions, like ‘literacy programs are a good idea.’ The questions were just decoration.” The evaluator summed up his sense of the purpose of evaluation as a question by reiterating a refrain mentioned by others: “How do you game the system to become compliant?” A second evaluator shared views that were just as cynical: “Evaluators are set up to fail because adequate resources have not been allocated. [Implementing agencies] want an evaluation right away. They get anyone who’s available at the time. They hire people who don’t know evaluation basics. There are no standards of quality.” Even without expectations of quality work, the expert insisted, evaluations had to be carried out. The expert provided a disturbing assessment of what takes place and why:

What’s the purpose of a low quality evaluation? To tick the evaluation box for the donors and to get some snappy quotes for the communications and public relations people. Most organizations have adopted an evaluation function because of donor pressure. It’s not authentic and it’s not supposed to be. The overwhelming majority of evaluations are the least good option: they only take place at the end of an activity, evaluators only talk to participants, and there is no control group. The evaluations have no bearing on their actions, learning or decisions. It’s just a process you go through to please the donor.

An NGO official related one way in which agencies ensure that program evaluations please donors. The official explained that “external evaluators have a hard time” because agencies may hand over program files and data to them only after they have been “cleaned”—that is, after reducing or removing signs of negative or low impact.

Skepticism about declarations of development success is a prominent theme in this chapter. It is often hard to tell where accuracy ends and positive spin begins. The detailed, passionately expressed, and frequently critical commentary about evaluation that officials and experts contributed underscores the seriousness of this issue. Yet all of those who shared their views about evaluation generally and youth program evaluations specifically did so not to collapse the development enterprise. On the contrary, my sense was that everyone was deeply frustrated by the context of most international development work: the need to avert risk and demonstrate success, even when the achievements are uncertain, lack context, and may not endure or even exist. One of the most frustrated contributors, in fact, reflected a larger hope for development work that, I think, most if not all of those I interviewed would have shared. The expert emphasized the need for “healthy skepticism and humility. It’s right to bring rigorous methodologies and learn from things that don’t work instead of doing things that you can control so they have the appearance of them working.” Then the expert concluded, “I know it’s possible.” As I will detail in the following chapters, so do I.

Warlords and Stovepipes

The African diplomat recalled the encounter that changed his thinking about development. During an interview, he described returning home following postelection unrest that had shaken his country. He had assumed that the causes of the turbulence were structural. “There was a land issue, an ethnic issue, a class issue,” he explained. To sidestep any trouble, he decided to drive his car straight to the region where he had grown up: his ethnic homeland. “I should feel safe there,” he told himself. No such luck: in the main city of his home area, “thirty or forty male youth stopped me. Some were looking very high on drugs and alcohol.” The youth, it turned out, were in no mood to listen. They had come to lecture. One of the youth asked the diplomat, “Who do you think you are, with your car, driving comfortably?” A second youth poked his chest and said, “You are part of our problem in this country. Your life can continue as if nothing has happened here. But if you turn your back when things go wrong, then you’re part of the problem.”

What had gone wrong? There were two major problems: education and unemployment. One of the youth told the diplomat, “I was at a polytechnic but I had to drop out because my mother had no school fees.” Another added, “We have done what we were told, but here we are. Where are those jobs?” Some of the male youth had followed the development blueprint—getting education and a university degree—but still ended up jobless. In response, some youth tried another road. “If you hijack a bus at the end of the month [after workers receive their monthly salaries], you get their money from payday and their mobile phones.” One youth told the diplomat, “If I see a young woman in a nice car, I know she has a nice job and a bit of money. If I relieve her of her money, she will just get more at the end of the month.” Another youth stated, “Why should these wealthy people live such a good

life? We don't want to harm people: we just want their money. This is what we do." The diplomat explained the youth's rationale for what they considered justified robbery. "Youth see theft as a solution: if they play by the rules and end up in a desperate situation, then they're a burden to their parents."

"There's a crisis for us youth," one male youth told the diplomat. "Nobody cares for us; nobody is looking out for us. Because we are poor, we can't rely on our relatives for help. And we cannot go on like this. The army of those who sleep with nothing are many and we're growing every day. You don't have much time." The male youth also referred to "the war between all of us youth and all of you." Youth hugely outnumber adults in the diplomat's country, and this youth knew it.

The diplomat also told me about a conversation he had with a female youth in an urban neighborhood during that same visit home. "She was twenty-one. She had her first child at age seventeen," and she lived with her mother. "Fathers are just at large and not around," she explained to him. To supplement the money her mother made selling produce in the market, she did men sexual favors for money. "I decided to do it," the female youth told the diplomat, "because we needed the money." The diplomat asked her if she used condoms to avoid HIV/AIDS. "We use condoms," the female youth explained, "but if [a customer] looks OK and they are willing to pay more [to have sex without a condom], then we do it with no condom." Like the male youth explaining their work as thieves, the female youth told the diplomat, "Something is so wrong. I'm not in a position to fix this: people like you can fix this. I'm a victim of this situation."

What did these conversations tell the African diplomat? "The truth is," he concluded, "youth all feel like outsiders who have no stake and absolutely nothing to lose." He was convinced that "the neoliberal approach isn't going to fix this. We can all create wealth, but what about building a sense of nationhood? What about building the economy from the bottom up?" He added that reliance on such "neoliberal investments from abroad" means "you have to pray that the wealth will trickle down. But it won't." Instead, "the bottom of the pyramid needs to be the place where we focus."

The diplomat's assessment resonates in many of the findings presented earlier in this book and the concluding comments that follow in this chapter. His account suggested that economic development policies unintentionally may drive a wedge between the relatively few economic winners and the masses of economic losers, many youth among them. Established paths to

adulthood may lack an endpoint. With family support on the wane, social expectation hard to bear, and inequality everywhere, huge proportions of African youth live in separate worlds where they develop actions and rationales for their outlier lives.

War and the Potential of Youth: Learning from Warlords

Young people are not supposed to be rapists, spies, concubines, or fighters. But the crucible of African wars makes such experiences pedestrian and hard to mesh with images of childhood that adults, governments, and international agencies celebrate and seek to safeguard. To a significant degree, severe wartime experiences create alternate realities for what childhood is and where it leads. The young people emerging from African conflicts stand at the cutting edge of the new normal.

The Outcast Majority covers many of the foundational components of this emerging reality. Two concern aspects of exclusion. While there are many reported kinds of exclusion (such as social, economic, and political), two in particular surfaced in analysis for this book. Both derive their potency partly from the challenges that unusually large youth populations create. The first is systemic exclusion. As reviewed in chapter 1, large populations of young Africans pursue education in systems that effectively exclude large majorities of them from advancing beyond primary school. The presence of huge youth cohorts makes the prospect of attending secondary school, and attaining jobs in government and the formal sector, even more distant: there are too many young people for too few openings. Large proportions of young people also may confront systems that limit or prevent youth access to vital resources like land, livestock, and housing and to work opportunities in informal sectors.

A second form of exclusion that arose from this analysis is cultural exclusion. As detailed in chapter 3, the inability of many African youth to gain adulthood in culturally prescribed ways contributes to a trajectory toward failed manhood and womanhood. Amid unprecedented youth cohorts and limited resources, it no longer may be possible for many youth to meet the expectations of manhood and womanhood laid down by cultural norms, expectations, and traditions. The dynamics of war create still more challenges. Trauma may haunt and negatively affect young lives, and malnutrition and iodine deficiency may limit mental capacities. The residue of war also can make its mark through continuing sexual and domestic violence and the use of drugs and alcohol.

Cities constitute the primary homeland of the new outcast majority. They are places where reinvention is almost a requirement, given the refusal or inability of youth to meet tradition-based rural expectations for gaining recognized adulthood. To gain manhood in a city, a male youth likely needs a steady job that can pay for an apartment instead of a room, food for a family, and school expenses for children. Yet obtaining this may be little more than a distant dream. More likely is for youth to become unmarried mothers and fathers, with children often living only with their mothers. At least in cities, getting older without acquiring the prerequisites of recognized manhood and womanhood is not so embarrassing, since just about everyone in the neighborhood is probably in the same situation.

A central theme in chapter 4 is the difficulty in tackling the challenge that huge youth populations present to their nations and the international development field in general. Perhaps the most prominent response is to try to provide jobs and job training, even if this reaches only relatively small numbers of unemployed youth. Another effort is to absorb youth into existing sectoral work. In both cases, the agendas of development actors play significant roles in determining what youth need and what remedies agencies will provide. The problem with this approach is that youth priorities are frequently unaddressed or subordinated to the predeterminations or narrow understandings of institutions and influential individuals.

As the final chapter describes, understanding the situation and imperatives of young people should play a crucial role in fashioning inclusive and appropriate provisions for youth. To do this, it is first important to recognize how the use of youngsters like Matthew, Washington, and Mariamu as foot soldiers, commanders, wives, and surveillance specialists by warlords (discussed in chapter 2) presents an instructive paradox to adults, governments, and international development institutions. It is undeniable that warlords (and some other military commanders) exploit young people. But ironically, their actions also reveal how young people can perform many tasks as well or better than adults. They recognize the talent and potential of the young people they abuse.

Brutalized and controlled instead of protected and nurtured, young people transform into exceptionally brave and disciplined fighters, inspirational leaders, superb scouts and infiltrators, and hard and dutiful workers. They also may be hard drinkers and heavy drug users and probably became sexually experienced at an early age, often as perpetrators or victims (or both) of sexual and domestic violence. Many also become parents. Children and youth who survive other excruciating war circumstances (most do not become

soldiers)—in cities and villages, in refugee or internally displaced camps, as orphans and household heads and those disabled by war—also grow up fast. But warlords and other military field commanders who exploit children and youth lead the way: they sweep up youngsters and routinely place them in prominent positions that call for extraordinary bravery, smarts, savvy, and aptitude. Through awful means, they set the stage for something new: a domain where huge numbers of young people endure tremendous hardship, are tested severely, experience life in new and sometimes horrific ways—and discover that they are truly talented young people. Their military superiors recognize and manipulate them, pushing them to the edge and then well beyond the envelope of ordinary life. More than any other group, warlords and some other military commanders demonstrate how wartime and postwar worlds are changed worlds, where childhood and tradition are unmoored and insecure. It is hard to go back to something that no longer exists.

Emerging from war, many youth find it difficult to have their accomplishments, fortitude, drive, expertise, and peace-building qualities recognized. There are many reasons for this, including the following:

- *It is difficult to envision war experience as both hardship and opportunity.* The skills and knowledge many African youth garner from wartime adversities—as leaders, entrepreneurs, single parents, and people with the ability to survive and surmount tremendous difficulty—usually remain overlooked. A young person with limited formal education is unlikely to find chances to discover and hone new skills during peacetime. Their tendency to remain peaceful, even when facing difficult circumstances in environments where corruption and inequality are pronounced, tends to go unnoticed too.
- *African wars tend to color many young people as “bad.”* Male youth often appear to others as emboldened by warfare, while female youth seem damaged by what they endured. This perspective of youth as either dangerous or damaged goods limits their chances for creating new postwar identities and building on the expertise and experiences that youth emerging from war retain. Often, “bad” youth are as easy to track as they are to misunderstand: “bad boys” often wear clothes considered too baggy while “bad girls” frequently wear clothes considered too tight.
- *The disturbing dimensions of wartime experience encourage young people to hide what they did and who they were during wars.* Serving as a soldier

or kept girl, arriving from a refugee camp as an orphan or unmarried mother (or both), showing up back home as a heavy drinker, drug user, or victim of fistula—such indications of unusual experiences are hard to square with how young people should grow up. War and postwar cities are filled with youth who prefer the anonymity and opportunity of urban life over returning to their childhood homes and the difficult cultural expectations that are likely to await them there. “Keeping quiet” is a common means of leaving terrible experiences behind. Belonging to a community and connecting to others are among the ways that youth move on from severe hardship.

Many African youth emerging from war have proven abilities to adjust and sometimes even flourish in deeply difficult circumstances. Sometimes the mere fact that they are alive demonstrates an extraordinary level of resilience. Their talent for adaptability and toughness is illuminated by those who conducted surveillance in war zones. Young soldiers risk their lives to cross enemy lines, hiding their identities and gathering intelligence. Refugee and internally displaced children and youth perform similar tasks, sneaking across borders to assess the condition of family land and determine whether security levels will allow other refugees or IDPs to return. These tasks are among those requiring a high degree of skill and exceptional daring. They also are the sorts of activities and talents that are difficult to translate into peacetime work.

Development and the Shadow of McNamara

Many African youth whose lives have been engulfed and upended by war are economic entrepreneurs and, on balance, remarkably resilient, creative, determined, and peaceful citizens. Nonetheless, as the prior section suggests, their talents and potential often are hidden or go unnoticed. In addition, standard signs of qualification—such as backgrounds in formal education or job training and whether they have land, housing, or a legal, recognized marriage—may be underwhelming or nonexistent. The huge numbers of young people with minimal education, training, and assets are an unwieldy fit for a development world influenced by conventional notions about youth and technocratic responses to them.

The shadow of McNamara hangs over international aid work in ways that distance the apparatus of development from ordinary youth. In Vietnam,

McNamara used the wrong tools to count the wrong things. A statement he made following his trip to Vietnam in 1962 illuminates the weakness of his approach: “Every quantitative measurement we have shows we are winning this war” (Weiner 2009). He was disastrously mistaken. Nonetheless, McNamara brought his metrics-dominated approach to identifying and addressing problems to his work as president of the World Bank. At the helm of this major international development institution, McNamara helped lay the groundwork for the neoliberal / Washington Consensus policies that extend into the present era. And as Natsios highlights (2010), the practices McNamara imported from the Pentagon helped fuel the expansion of quantitative measurement in development work.

Quantitative measurement is infused into the policies and practice of contemporary international development work. Agencies and officials regularly deliver countable results that are positioned within established systems, comply with tight regulations, and generate indicators of progress. While this promotes a sense of verifiable efficiency, it also reflects a specific approach to perceiving, analyzing, and responding to development challenges. Among the characteristics of this approach are:

1. *The influence of sectors on development action.* Sectoral stovepipes and silos predetermine priorities and stipulate directions for investment and action. The inherent inflexibility of this approach can make it difficult to address the flow of outcast youth toward cities, informal sectors, avoidance of the police, and dealing with failed adulthood (among other things). Development imperatives frequently point in different directions, such as agriculture, decentralization, formal education, and private-sector investment. None of these priorities may directly address the priority profile of most youth.

The creation of youth as an issue that cuts across sectors has not resolved this fundamental disconnect. However, it has spotlighted a lack of clarity between what constitutes gender and youth domains. Although the implicit emphasis in the gender field on women and in the youth field on male youth would seem to create some sort of complementarity, no resolution yet exists to resolve the confusion that these two fields create.

Fortunately, workforce development is rising in significance as a sector-related approach to youth needs. While this upswing is encouraging, such initiatives simultaneously raise important questions,

including how job needs balance with other needs in youth lives, which fraction of huge youth populations should receive access to training and other supports, and whether programs demonstrate class favoritism through preferences in access (are better-off, well-connected youth getting into programs?) or focus (do programs favor elite youth by focusing on their skill sets?).

2. *Narrow conceptions of development challenges and solutions.* Reliance on quantitative data has yielded demonstrable benefits for those in the international development world. Assessments can survey broadly and produce statistics-based determinations. Quantifiable metrics emphasize the control of funders and implementers over the process of aid work: deciding what should be done, counting what you do, and using statistics to calculate results. They also facilitate compliance with strict regulatory requirements and the ability to communicate a sense of measured progress.

At the same time, the orientation toward quantification in development work runs the risk of undercutting the value of trial-and-error experimentation, which may be crucial to uncovering ways that effectively and sustainably reach outcast youth. It also cultivates a sense that poverty can be addressed without substantive consultations with those who are poor. Without knowing it or intending to do so, well-meaning development officials can deliver initiatives that demonstrate favoritism, fuel exclusion, or simply do not address the priorities of poor people.

The emphasis on quantitative over qualitative approaches and economics over other social science disciplines in development work is pronounced. This is unfortunate because the many dimensions of outcast youth lives, as with other important segments of a population, cannot be grasped by a single research method or social science discipline. Gauging a group's priorities and protection concerns and, in the case of war-affected youth, the many impacts of war and alienation on young lives, requires a combination of methods and modes of analysis that have yet to influence development policy and program frameworks adequately. Balanced integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and varieties of social science methods and orientations, has the potential to yield considerably more information on the lives and needs of poor and excluded people as well as the forces, structures, and policies that support poverty and exclusion. In addition,

integration promises to expand understandings of the roles youth play in building peace and why many resist engagement in violence. Crucially, it also can fuel the delivery of more effective and relevant responses to the challenges that poverty and exclusion create.

3. *Weaknesses in evaluation work.* Trends emerging from interviews with twenty-eight officials and experts point to several issues concerning the practice and context of evaluation work. While high-quality evaluations exist, low-quality evaluative work predominates. Many evaluations may fit the latter category for several reasons. First, they may focus narrowly on internal program results (indicators, outcomes, outputs, etc.) and fail to examine adequately the context of initiatives or the contrast between recipients of initiatives and those who are not recipients (that is, those in a control group). Second, evaluators may lack the ability or training to conduct quality evaluation work that is independent of donor or implementer influence. Third, there may be insufficient time or funding to carry out evaluations of reasonable quality. Fourth, low-quality evaluations that emphasize positive results may be preferable to quality evaluations that also investigate negative, negligible, intended, and unintended results. This may particularly be the case when program implementers and funders are under strong pressure to report upbeat results regardless of their veracity or when programs seek to receive more funding. In such cases, evaluations run the risk of promoting overly positive and thus distorted results.
4. *An emphasis on programs over policies.* A persistent trend in youth work is the development of programs that reach small proportions of enormous youth populations. Indications emerging from research for this book point to a related trend: some programs are stocked with well-adjusted/elite youth because they can help implementers under pressure to demonstrate success from the get-go. Another is the popularity of programs that effectively reach well-adjusted/elite youth by virtue of their subject matter (such as workforce development in the information technology sector).

What is often not clear is how such programs affect youth not in programs. Do they stoke feelings of alienation, fatalism, or frustration for members of outcast youth majorities? Do they support the view that international agencies are aligned with the nepotistic practices of country governments? Do they exacerbate social and economic inequalities? Do they provide rationales for turning to illegal practices

to make a living or to exact revenge from a system that seems unfair? Or do these programs have little or no influence on youth not in programs? We usually know little about the answers to these questions.

Two related issues also call for consideration. First, strategic targeting appears to be a significantly undervalued priority for most youth programs. As Mercy Corps notes, “Off-the-shelf, plug-and-play interventions, driven by the same assumptions, regardless of context, and designed to produce the same outputs are, unfortunately, the norm” (2015: 3). Although targeting specific youth does of course take place (as with programs for former combatants), youth programs often may not have detailed rationales for aiming their work at particular youth subgroups. Many of these programs have relatively high unit costs and are not scalable. Given these realities, what is the strategic purpose of reaching a tiny fraction of young people in need of support?

Second, the focus on programs that reach relatively few youth overshadows the potential for implemented policies to reach many more young people. Advocating for improved policies and reforming existing policies that negatively affect youth holds the potential to reach and positively impact exponentially more youth than nearly all programs can.

5. *Undervaluing interactions with ordinary people.* As development workers strive to deliver results, they may lack the sort of training, confidence, language ability, curiosity, or experience that would help them exchange with and listen to ordinary, nonelite people. Some may not see such an activity as particularly valuable. But if they do, a series of forces may constrain the ability of officials engaged in development work to listen to and reflect on the views, concerns, and priorities of the people their work attempts to reach. Organizational cultures, imperatives, and pressures may define effectiveness and productivity in entirely different ways. There may be no reward in setting aside time to interact with members of target populations. In any case, the combination of mountains of e-mails, tight schedules, reporting requirements, multitudes of meetings, and other work obligations may make the prospect of learning directly from ordinary people in developing countries virtually impossible.

The need to listen and engage with youth and other nonelite and marginalized people is as important as it is currently insufficient. Uvin’s research

in Burundi, for example, found that “being listened to, being treated with respect and equity, the absence of corruption . . . are matters that Burundians feel in daily life” (2009: 61). Anderson, Brown, and Jean found that genuine engagement in development work was more significant than all other activities: “If we did nothing else to improve the [international development] aid system, the very act of adding occasions and opportunities for aid providers to listen to people with whom we work, and to let them know that their ideas and judgments are valued, would by itself bring a fundamental shift in the relationship of aid providers with aid recipients” (2012: 146).

As it stands, the sector-driven, statistics-based, results-focused world of international development frequently misses the mark, in large part because of its distance from the people it hopes to help and its limited understanding of the context in which they live. With an eye to the priorities, talents, and concerns of outcast youth majorities in war-affected Africa, the next chapter introduces a framework that aims to address this problem.

Toward Youth Inclusion

A Framework for Change

This book details the vast gap between outcast youth in war-affected Africa and the international development enterprise. It reveals how international development aid is reaching marginalized youth ineffectively and inefficiently, including war-affected African youth, who are among those most in need of acceptance and support.

What follows is a framework for collectively supporting a process to reverse this trend and tap into the reserve of tenacity, ingenuity, and diverse skills that youth in war and postwar Africa, and elsewhere, have to offer. The framework aims to advance an inclusive approach to development work generally and youth development in particular. The aim is not to highlight specific interventions—such as policies concerning land, housing, or informal economic sector reform or programs for job training, trauma counseling, basic skills, or accelerated learning. Nor is the aim to urge engagements in the lives of specific subsets of marginalized and excluded youth populations. The reason is that the particulars of policy, advocacy, and program efforts should surface directly from the results of high-quality, context-specific, trust-based, integrated qualitative and quantitative assessment work conducted before any action is undertaken.

The purpose of the framework is to orient thinking and action toward inclusiveness, relevance, and receptivity. The new orientation promises to recognize and empower young people, who are consistently put down and profoundly underestimated. The framework has the potential to boost the effectiveness of promising new concepts such as positive youth development, calls to expand inclusive economic growth for youth (Yudhoyono, Sirleaf, and Cameron 2013: 8), internal agency reforms like USAID's youth policy (USAID 2012), and mission adjustments like the World Bank's enhanced emphasis on inclusive growth and halting extreme poverty (World Bank 2013b; Igoe



Four youth in Burundi in 2012.

2013) and DfID's commitment to addressing social exclusion (Department for International Development 2005; Betts, Watson, and Gaynor 2010).¹ These approaches, and many more, currently have to be shoehorned into an aid environment constricted by a host of priorities, sectors, procedures, measures, regulations, and expectations, as well as by insufficient accurate information about youth alienation, exclusion, and resilience and the impact of war and of governance that is corrupt and threatening. The framework proposes revisions to the ways in which the international development enterprise, together with developing country governments, learns, plans, and proceeds.

The framework divides into two corresponding parts. The first lists a set of sixteen elements that lay new groundwork for change within institutions. The second provides a progression of steps for instituting in-country activities. Together, they promise to drive development work toward more effective and inclusive action for marginalized youth as well as for international development work in general.

Elements for Reforming Institutional Action

The following framework elements provide a foundation for reforming the work of development institutions and boosting inclusion in development policies and practices concerning marginalized youth:

1. *Place excluded female and male youth at the center of development work.*
Given that most developing countries have enormous populations of female and male youth and most youth endure systemic, cultural, and other kinds of exclusion, their priorities and the factors that exclude many of them must inform the work of development institutions directly. Striving to reverse exclusion and support excluded young people has the potential to boost economies, stabilize societies, and expand access to fundamental rights significantly.
2. *Retain this rule of thumb: find out who the “bad” youth are and pursue ways to address their priorities.* Youth castigated as “bad” are the key to reversing exclusive practices and supporting youth imperatives. There are likely to be large and challenging groups of young people to engage with, particularly during and after wars. Former female and male combatants, those with alcohol or drug abuse problems, those who steal or prostitute themselves for a living, those who are viewed as failed men and women—these and many more “bad” youth require attention and assistance. Recognition and support for such young people promises to nourish and direct their entrepreneurial acumen toward much more stable and beneficial goals. Qualitative research on the context of morality and legality (noted in element 9, below) should investigate local definitions of good and bad youth and who is being denigrated, ignored, or excluded due to perceived “badness.” Practices that effectively favor well-connected, elite youth must end.
3. *Address the overlap between gender and youth.* The widely reported emphasis on adult women and young girls in the name of gender and on male youth in the name of youth appears complementary. After all, gender and youth efforts both aim to counteract exclusion and disempowerment while mainly operating separately.

The parallel arrangement, however, also creates problems. The concepts are confusing because they obviously intersect: everyone has a gender and many are youth. The strikingly low profile of female youth in current gender and youth practice, moreover, too often marginalizes them. This is illuminated by the following finding: in my

field research across more than two decades, female youth (including adolescent girls) regularly surfaced as the most at-risk population in war and postwar contexts. Generic perceptions of male youth as troublemakers are similarly destructive. Finding a coherent, integrated approach to inclusion that integrates gender and youth concepts promises to address such oversights and misunderstandings far more effectively. The starting point is the following: all analyses of and responses to youth challenges must be gendered.

4. *Transform fear of male youth into an advocacy asset.* Although the widespread conception that most male youth are a menace to peace is false, the fear that many people have about male youth is real. As a veteran development expert commented, “The one thing that energizes governments is their belief that youth are dangerous.”

Fear of male youth should be transformed into an opportunity to confront and demolish stereotypes of male youth as dangerous and female youth as insignificant. In addition, officials of international agencies and developing country governments, as well as traditional leaders and civil society members, should consider the implications of unprecedentedly large youth populations on government policies and cultural traditions. Many may be unaware, for example, of connections between overwhelming youth demographics and failed adulthood. As youth populations expand and resources contract, long-standing prerequisites for manhood and womanhood—such as land, housing, livestock, bride-price payments for male youth, and formal marriage for males and females—may no longer be attainable for most young people. Can the adulthood mandates be updated, so that so many youth do not face the prospect of becoming failed men and women? Can female and male youth gain easier access to vital adulthood prerequisites? It may be necessary for international officials and national and local leaders to work with ordinary youth to adjust traditional adulthood requirements and expectations in ways that minimize the fallout of youth failure and lay the groundwork for youth success.

5. *Do not homogenize youth.* “Youth” is a routinely misapplied concept. Presuming that huge youth cohorts are essentially uniform—and can be referred to simply as “the youth”—overlooks the often-profound significance of exclusion as well as class, gender, and other differences within youth populations. Recognizing articulate elite youth as

leaders or “voices” representing all youth in a region or nation invites distortions and inaccuracies about the views and needs of marginalized youth majorities. Such tendencies can unintentionally exacerbate inequalities by opening the door for elite youth to dominate access to youth initiatives, present reform agendas that are unlikely to align with marginalized youth’s priorities, and gain undeserved recognition as the spokespeople of youth.

6. *Question conventional methods for youth engagement.* Attempts to access outcast youth majorities through conventional community structures and civil society groups is inherently problematic. It is likely that such youth are neither accurately nor adequately represented (and may be despised) by recognized community and civil society leaders. Elders, authorities, and assorted other mainstream figures may overlook the views and needs of youth who are poor, undereducated, not submissive to traditional authority, drink or smoke, or dress untraditionally or were somehow involved with fighting forces during wars. The tendency to disregard or rebuke poor, defiant male youth and poor, unmarried female youth with children is all too common. In short, that which is considered bottom-up, community-based development work may be nothing of the sort. Instead, it may constitute homegrown, local-level methods for enforcing exclusion, inequality, and humiliation.

The concepts of community and civil society must be reexamined and reformulated to adapt to salient outcast youth realities. Engagement must take place with leaders, communities, and civil society groups that truly represent excluded youth, rather than with so-called experts, leaders, or representative groups who are either out of touch with the actual needs and priorities of excluded youth or disinterested in advocating for them (or both). To do this, authentic excluded youth communities and leaders must be uncovered, recognized, and empowered. They may be found in unlikely places, such as among male youth who regularly meet at particular street corners and female youth who congregate to wash clothes or plait hair together. Truly influential and venerated youth leaders may be controversial hip-hop musicians, officials of a local religious organization, or activists shunned by the establishment.

7. *Act assertively against extreme government abuse.* It is absolutely crucial to develop and steadily enact effective strategies that recognize pronounced governance and rights challenges and advocate to re-

form or oppose them. The responsibility for international actors to act increases dramatically in countries where it is too dangerous for citizens and civil society to speak out against intimidation, corruption, nepotism, vanishings, unlawful arrest and detention, torture, and other forms of brutal governance undertaken by state actors or those aligned with them. Inaction or ineffective efforts against alarming governmental abuses promote the impression, to youth and other citizens, that international actors support regimes that carry them out. This can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of international actors and embolden threatening governments. Easterly's maxim that "an incremental positive change in freedom will yield a positive change in well-being for the world's poor" (2013: 344) should inform sustained action to counteract exclusion and support marginalized youth and others whose rights are routinely threatened.

8. *Set aside preset priorities until authentic assessment research is conducted.* The tension between institutional priorities and those of marginalized youth is one of the most persistent constraints on effective youth policies and programming. Preset institutional imperatives, such as training for work in particular sectors or locations, may conflict with or have little relevance to the imperatives of marginalized youth or the factors that exclude them. Investigating youth's priorities and the primary causes of youth exclusion and then integrating the findings into policy and program work promises to be a far more effective way forward.
9. *Include study of the moral and legal context in assessment work.* Programs, policies, and advocacy strategies should strive to account for local definitions of morality and legality. Ambiguous moralities and legalities in war zones, city streets, and the countryside make this essential. It is often the case that the livelihoods and residences of many youth are technically illegal (particularly those in cities), while at the same time, many police and other state security forces, civil servants, and politicians consider violent or corrupt practices as standard and perhaps justified procedure. Getting an accurate sense of what is seen as "right" and "wrong" on the ground can enhance understanding of excluded youth's actions and rationales and thus directly inform activities that are needed to support them.

10. *Recognize that hidden experiences and conditions are likely to factor significantly in youth's lives.* The experiences and conditions may range from hidden talents and assets to the impact of malnutrition, anemia, iodine deficiency, trauma, having perpetrated and/or experienced sexual violence, being a single parent or orphan (or both), and much more. Drug and alcohol abuse, in addition, may serve as a means to deal with wartime trauma and recurrent pressures and may signal a profound degree of fatalism toward danger (such as contracting HIV/AIDS). The prominence of prostitution for female youth, moreover, may be partly an outgrowth of failed manhood: without marriage, how will male youth secure sexual relations with females? It is possible that many resort to "tricking" female youth or visiting prostitutes while very small numbers carry out sexual violence.

At the same time, it is vital to recognize that many abilities and skills that young people develop in situations of excruciating difficulty may be shielded from view by intention. Crucial hidden realities, in terms of real or potential assets and deficits, underscore the importance of high-quality assessment and evaluation work that incorporates investigation into the presence and impact of concealed or overlooked issues. Engaging young people in this work is likely to advance the veracity, depth, and utility of the results.

11. *Rebalance policy and program work.* Implemented policies generally stand a far better chance of positively affecting large numbers of youth than do programs that reach small proportions of youth populations. Accordingly, it is crucial to investigate the impact of government and international agency policies that may inadvertently fuel youth exclusion and inequality. Existing policies, for example, may block vital informal economic sector work, make it difficult for most youth to attend secondary or vocational school or become adults, exacerbate social and economic inequality, facilitate impunity, or engineer social change (such as favoring rural over urban areas) in ways that counter ordinary youth priorities. Reforming damaging policies and implementing inclusive ones should become priority activities because appropriate, implemented policies can affect exponentially more young lives than program work does.
12. *Prioritize strategic targeting and youth participation in programming.* It is necessary to develop sound rationales that address the priorities

of particular subsets of excluded youth populations. Youth can and should participate in assessment, design, and, where relevant and feasible, implementation work. Program officials also should design evaluations that examine the impact of initiatives on youth in and not in programs over time. Including youth in evaluation work also is recommended. The final in-country reform step (below) proposes one approach to incorporating youth in all facets of program work. Programs that can extend their reach to more youth than most, such as through distance education or the use of mobile phones, should follow these guidelines as well.

13. *Integrate quantitative and qualitative research data and the contributions of development economics with insights from other social science disciplines.* The current focus on statistical data in development analysis, operations, and assessment is excessive and invites distortions. The dominance of numeric data over other kinds of information must be rectified.

Done properly, qualitative assessments, evaluations, and other forms of research (including methods that are participatory) have the potential to build trust with alienated youth and delve into issues calling for policy and program responses. Such approaches also can provide context and identify priority concerns for complementary quantitative research work. Similarly, the work of social scientists trained in investigating youth concerns through direct engagement, and the prospect it provides for incorporating social and cultural factors into analyses (particularly those relating to exclusion), complements and contextualizes the existing focus on economic issues.

14. *Stop (unintentionally) making it worse.* Much work that aims to assist youth inadvertently can lead to counterproductive results. Declining to push against national and international policies that systematically disadvantage youth (such as those relating to informal economies, housing, land, marriage, policing, and reproductive health) or that facilitate predatory practices against youth (which frequently involve the police or other security forces) runs the risk of validating forces that further marginalize the lives and rights of excluded youth. When comparatively educated or elite young people gain access to programming, it can engender deleterious effects among already-excluded youth. Advocating for policy reforms and designing programs that are inclusive of outcast youth must become explicit priorities.

15. *Cultivate learning environments for policy and program work.* One of the most vital characteristics of successful policy and program work is maintaining an ability to improve interventions over time. However, the creation of learning environments can be hard to pull off. Agencies and governments may know that certain policies factor significantly in marginalizing and excluding youth, yet they may lack the ability or time (or will) to act against such policies. Donor and implementing agencies may be under pressure to institute generic targeting procedures that aim to reach as many youth as they can. Marginalized youth priorities may not mesh with the often-predetermined priorities of donor and implementing agencies.

Working to improve the lives of young people with multiple needs is difficult. Making and learning from mistakes is a central part of the process. With this in mind, it is important to realize that developing effective policy and program interventions that benefit truly marginalized and excluded youth, with their array of priorities, needs, and challenges, requires flexibility and room for a substantial learning curve. It is thus useful for agencies and governments to take risks and allow for well-intentioned mistakes to occur—provided they are evaluated and used to improve the work.

Insisting on high-quality research carried out by independent evaluation professionals that does not shield disquieting results (and that hopefully include youth on evaluation teams) is a crucial part of any learning process. A component of improved evaluation work is eradicating the term “beneficiary” from use. It is unsuitable because it emphatically communicates bias. Descriptive and impartial terms such as “recipient” are far more appropriate. Evaluation reports also must be made publicly available and examined carefully by donors, implementers, auditors, legislators, and others connected to the initiative.

16. *Revamp job expectations for development officials.* International development officials are often elites who were not trained to engage with nonelites. They also often have their work time swallowed by activities that effectively maintain distance from the ordinary people that their work seeks to support. The absence of familiarity with people and their concerns by those empowered to address them must be reversed. Development agencies should provide the kind of training and time that will allow officials to engage directly with ordinary people in rural and urban venues.

A Process for In-Country Reform

The following six steps propose a process for reforming development work in countries where it is undertaken. Together with the elements detailed above, they promise to increase significantly the effectiveness of international development agencies in advancing youth inclusion in war-affected African nations and elsewhere.

1. *Conduct sound assessments of marginalized youth's priorities and contexts.*

It is essential to temporarily set aside institutional and sectoral priorities, and policy or program preferences, until appropriate assessment work is concluded. The assessment work should inform subsequent policy, advocacy, and program work.

There are two main purposes of an assessment for marginalized and excluded youth. The first is to uncover their priorities—as they pertain to prominent subgroups of marginalized youth (rural and urban, male and female, etc.)—and the primary causes of youth exclusion. The second is to suggest policy and programming responses that address youth priorities in ways that are inclusive.

Although marginalized and excluded youth tend to be wary and distrustful of outsiders, extended, open-ended qualitative interviews build trust and invite youth to share their views, which are usually thoughtful and frequently surprising. One way to build credibility and trust with excluded youth, and create space for youth to contribute important insights (including those that youth normally hide), is to do the following:

- Identify what music marginalized youth are listening to. Buy the CDs (or cassette tapes) and, if the key songs are local products (which can be particularly enlightening), have them translated. Incorporate discussions of the meaning of key songs into interviews with youth (if possible, play cuts of the songs during interviews). Determine the profile of youth who avidly listen to the most popular songs (local songs in particular). Investigate whether any songs are banned by the government. Find out why.

Among the other topics that youth interviews should investigate are:

- the specific assets and talents of marginalized youth;
- the priorities of marginalized male and female youth;
- factors that support excluded youth, including opportunities for

- expression and recognition (such as in music or the media);
- local definitions of morality and legality as they pertain to excluded youth and powerful actors (such as the police, state security forces, and other government authorities);
- issues that separate youth from each other (such as class, gender, location, or ethnicity);
- factors that promote fatalism and frustration, including drug and alcohol abuse, avoiding safe sex practices, unmarried motherhood, life as an orphan, violence against female youth, and impunity for perpetrators;
- factors that promote cultural exclusion, including whether most youth are able to become adults and what happens if they fail;
- factors that systemically exclude youth from access to crucial opportunities and resources, such as school, work, land, and housing;
- the nature of relations between government authorities (including the police and state security forces) and young people;
- which national and international actors, policies, and programs are effectively (and sometimes unintentionally) promoting youth exclusion, youth violence, social inequality, nepotism, and bad governance generally, and what should be done to address the most prominent concerns; and
- which programs and policy reforms have the best chance of advancing inclusion for excluded and marginalized youth.

Consider conducting individual or peer group interviews instead of focus groups. Focus groups are structured and often are hierarchical (with a youth group or association, for example) and tend to rely on the insights of a small proportion of members (often educated elites) while others hesitate or decline to express their views openly. Peer groups, in contrast, are unstructured groups of youth who have similar profiles and are more likely to speak frankly. The peer group approach is strongly recommended.

2. *Advocate for policy reform.* Quality assessment work should identify specific policies that exclude large numbers of youth. Very likely, there will be a long list of possibilities pertaining to education, informal economies, housing, economic issues, land, urbanization, adulthood mandates, the police, basic protections, prostitution, slavery, and so on. Agencies will have to decide on the policy or policies upon which to focus their advocacy strategies and efforts. Their decision should be

informed by guidance in element 7 under Elements for Reforming Institutional Action, above.

3. *Establish participatory programs that focus on excluded youth's priorities and specific subsets of excluded youth populations.* Program officials should answer the following questions. First, if you can reach only a very small proportion of youth, who will you target as program participants and what is your rationale? Second, how will you address the priorities of your target group in your program activities? Third, in what ways will youth participation drive program work? Fourth, what steps will you take to minimize the potential for negative impact on youth who cannot participate in your program?

A thorny challenge is figuring out how to advance inclusion with finite budgets (and often with high-unit-cost concerns). One possible way to address this is to create programming in geographic locations where large numbers of marginalized youth reside (such as an urban slum or rural village) and can participate, and then evaluate the degree to which inclusion is reasonably achieved. Another is to customize programming for particularly threatened and at-risk youth groups, such as urban gang members or those working as prostitutes. The contrast between gang membership in Juba (male orphans and elites with ties to the government) and Bujumbura (male ex-combatants), noted in chapter 3, highlights the need to use context-specific profile data to determine program target groups, goals, and objectives. Regardless of the program undertaken, it will be important to evaluate: (1) how many can be included effectively; and (2) whether the program causes negative impact on those who are not included (and if so, how to address this outcome).

4. *Develop coordinated policy and program strategies.* Well-intentioned programs frequently require forceful policy advocacy to enhance prospects for positive impact. Vocational training illustrates the importance of such coordination. As many in the education and youth fields are frustratingly aware, training for occupations that have limited job prospects and training that is done ineffectively remain all too common. In addition, program officials may be pressed to provide traditional-skills training, such as some sort of "home economics" for adolescent girls and female youth, even when it promises limited prospects for viable employment. Rural-based vocational training programs, moreover, can accelerate urban migration, since cities generally are the best places for trainees to find work after graduation.

The point here is to think big. Coordinating policy and program strategies is usually essential to enhancing prospects for positive impact beyond the bounds of program work. That is what those focusing on excluded youth should prioritize. A program is not just a means for reaching a relative handful of needy young people. It also is an opportunity to learn about and then advocate for instituting, reforming, or removing policies in order to enhance the rights of and prospects for disadvantaged young people on national and regional levels.

5. *Institute and invest in high-quality monitoring and evaluation work.*

Poor or even middling monitoring and evaluation work may allow agencies to avoid facing the considerable challenges that delivering truly effective aid to excluded young people presents. It may also help lay the foundation for agencies and governments to receive additional donor funds. But reporting that effectively rubber-stamps a weak youth program undercuts learning and—much worse—may ultimately harm youth in and not in programs.

Employing quality monitoring and evaluation tools (such as using control groups and investigating the impact of programs on youth who cannot participate) and independent experts promises to dramatically improve prospects for lasting positive impact and to minimize prospects for negative impact. The pervasive reliance on indicators, which by themselves can generate narrow or perhaps even distorted results, must be supplemented with qualitative methods. Participatory evaluation approaches that include meaningful and significant contributions from youth also are recommended. As mentioned earlier, early in the program or policy process, challenges should be anticipated and viewed as learning opportunities. Program adjustments may be required to address various challenges that arise. Early monitoring and evaluation work may reveal that prior nutritional deficiencies and traumatic events require particular kinds of measures and supports for youth participants. Protection or child-support concerns may be limiting the involvement of female youth. Or the monitoring and evaluation work may suggest that having female and male youth participating in the same activities together is inappropriate.

These and other potentially significant concerns should be investigated, addressed, and evaluated—and then shared (when possible) in workshops and meetings with governmental and nongovernmental institutions whose work affects youth lives. Monitoring and evaluation reports also should be published and distributed publicly.

6. *Strategize on how to include both elite and nonelite youth in program work.* Elite youth who are established in civil society may be discouraged by a new emphasis on marginalized youth. Accordingly, consider using the focus on marginalized youth to engage with and expand the capacity of recognized or promising youth “leaders.” Hiring them to be assessment, monitoring, and evaluation team members, mixing and working with outcast youth colleagues, should provide them with opportunities to learn about members of the marginalized youth majority and how they can be assisted effectively. It is a potentially productive way to include young elites and nonelites in efforts to reverse youth exclusion.

Accepting and empowering outcast youth majorities is a game changer because it spotlights the presence of huge numbers of young people on the margins of societies and economies. Their predicament underscores the need to counteract forces that promote exclusion and to collaborate with excluded youth to address their priorities. This book and the framework detailed in this chapter are devoted to recognizing and addressing the youth-driven realities that shape war-affected Africa and many other parts of the world.

Notes

Chapter One. Demography and Alienation

1. The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that Sierra Leone has a population of 5,363,669 while Ireland's is 4,670,976 (July 2011 estimates; Central Intelligence Agency 2011a, 2011b)

2. A recent recollection lends context to this statement: "Several years ago, I wrote that the central irony concerning Africa's urban youth was that 'they are a demographic majority that sees itself as an outcast minority' (Sommers 2003: 1). Since that time, field research with rural and urban youth in war and postwar contexts within and beyond Africa has led me to revise this assertion. The irony appears to apply to most developing country youth regardless of their location" (Sommers 2012b: xv).

3. Seventy-four percent of Angolans and 75 percent of Rwandans are ages zero through twenty-nine. The other three countries have proportions between these two: DRC and Liberia are both at 74.6 percent, while Burundi is at 74.9 percent. The proportion of Ugandans under age thirty is the world's highest: 78.2 percent of the entire population (Leahy et al. 2007: 90).

4. While premarital pregnancy and birth is a fact in my fieldwork with and about African youth, it is also a more widely documented, and rising, phenomenon. Over a decade prior to the writing of this book, Calvès was able to draw from several sources to highlight that "one of the most significant changes" in the "timing and sequencing of family formation events" in sub-Saharan Africa has been "the increasing prevalence of pregnancies and births among adolescents who are not formally married. Because young African women and men postpone first marriage but often do not wait for marriage to become sexually active premarital pregnancies and births are on the rise" (1999: 291).

5. McLean Hilker and Fraser define "the multiple dimensions of exclusion" as follows: economic exclusion ("unemployment, underemployment, lack of livelihood, lack of ownership of assets"); political exclusion ("lack of political participation, voice, and decision-making power"); social exclusion (lack of or limited access to "education,

health, water, sanitation, and housing”); and cultural status (“lack of recognition of a group’s cultural practices, discrimination, loss of status/respect, humiliation/honour, lack of identity”) (2009: 10).

6. As does the African Union, which defines both “youth” and “young people” as “every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years” (African Union 2006: 3).

7. The explanation that UNICEF provides concerning the challenges to defining adolescence is excellent (UNICEF 2011: 8, 10, 12).

8. Excerpt from “Youthman,” a song by Lansana Sheriff, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2008; translated from Krio. Honwana (2012: 24) cites these lyrics as well.

9. Although Green (2012) mixes “Africa” with “sub-Saharan Africa” in his book chapter, he appears to be referring exclusively to sub-Saharan Africa.

10. Goldstone argues that “it was not population growth per se but rather growth beyond the absorptive capacity of early modern economic, social, and political institutions that undid these delicate balances and ruptured the social order” (1991: 469).

11. This thesis is detailed in Sommers 2011.

12. Cincotta and Doces note that there are other locations for “high youth-bulge proportion states” beyond Africa and the Middle East. They are states found in “the South American Andes, in the midrib of the Central American isthmus, on the island of Hispaniola [that is, the Dominican Republic and Haiti], and in the Pacific Islands” (2012: 101).

13. The events were both sponsored by the Society for International Development: Youth in Development Work Group. One was called “How Far to Take Empowerment? Genuine Youth Engagement: What Does It Look Like? How to Achieve It?” It took place on March 21, 2012, at IREX, an NGO based in Washington, D.C. The second event was entitled “Measuring the ‘Hard-to-Measure’: Evaluating Youth Outcomes in a Peacebuilding Context,” which took place on May 8, 2012.

14. The event on urban poverty was hosted by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. It was called “Reducing Urban Poverty: A Policy Workshop,” and it took place on November 1, 2011.

Chapter Two. The Wartime Template

1. Representing Mende words in English is challenging because the Mende language uses a different alphabet. Discussions with Mende-language experts surfaced a second spelling: *sorkwaehun*. A related Mende term is *sorkwihun*, which means “corner.”

2. A description of hiding places is found in Sommers 1997: 7–10.

3. The following account draws from Sommers 2005a (93–98), as well as field interviews in Akon.

4. All actual names have been changed in this section.

5. The entrance of the LURD as a Liberian fighting force opened up what Liberians called “World War Three,” or the third and final phase of the civil war.

6. The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, or ECOMOG, was an armed force that comprised national army contingents from several West African states. Nigeria's force was the largest and most dominant within ECOMOG in Sierra Leone. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established the multilateral force. Envisioned as a peacekeeping force, ECOMOG repeatedly played a central role in fighting against rebel forces in Sierra Leone.

7. See, for example, Horst 2006 and IRIN 2011.

8. I first used this quote in Sommers 2001b: 194.

9. Definitions for malnutrition and, by way of contrast, undernutrition are as follows: "Malnutrition is defined as a diet containing insufficient quantities of nutrients or a diet in which one or more essential nutrients is missing or is present in the wrong proportions. Undernutrition refers to an overall deficiency of nutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals) due to an inadequate intake as part of an otherwise well-balanced diet. Undernutrition is a more severe form of malnutrition" (de Souza, Fernandes, and Tavares do Carmo 2011: 132).

10. Unfortunately, Appoh doesn't state the ages of the Ghanaian children in her study: she only mentions that they were "school children who were enrolled at the basic schools in the study area" (2004: 88).

11. Still another way to depict this notion is as continuous traumatic stress (CTS), which "is focused primarily on present and future trauma exposure, rather than on that which has already taken place" (Eagle and Kaminer 2013: 97).

12. Eyber and Ager's research with postwar Angolan youth supports the profound significance of family burials in Angola. Instead of worrying about "having nightmares or memories of violent incidents," the primary source of distress for the Angolan youth they interviewed was "unfulfilled burial obligations to the dead" (2004: 203). For them, burying family members was critically important because it demonstrated respect and prevented "trouble with the spirits in the future" (201).

Chapter Three. Moving Forward

1. Hansen draws his information on the symbolism of male circumcision from a study by Janice Boddy (1982) on male circumcision in Sudan, not Somalia. The reason he provides is the following: "In a Somali context most attention has been paid to female circumcision and less attention to the symbolic meaning of the circumcision of boys. Therefore we have to look towards other studies of male circumcision to fully appreciate the meaning of male circumcision" (Hansen 2008: 1113).

2. Lwambo later comments that "the strong presence of international donors and NGOs in parts of eastern DRC has created an economic disequilibrium, where NGO workers are among the few that have access to wealth and prestige" (2011: 22–23).

3. Lwambo mentions "youth" in this context—but her reference point seems to refer exclusively to male youth.

4. Even before the civil war, it was difficult for male youth to marry. In Liberia as

well as Sierra Leone, “older men marry much younger women because only older men have the resources to pay” bride wealth (Richards 2006: 203).

5. The structural similarity of the research approaches in Burundi and in Rwanda is briefly explained in Sommers 2012b: xix–xx, 52.

6. Kelly has written that “rapes in DRC are so common and vicious that the United Nations undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, John Holmes, called rape in DRC ‘the worst in the world’” (2010: 2).

7. Taylor adds that “one can seize the wealth and power from those that one envies, but one cannot seize another’s intelligence and beauty. When Hutu took control of Rwanda in 1959, their revolution did nothing to reverse the ethnic stereotypes inherited from colonialism. The reason for this is that a critique of colonialism and its effects on people’s categories of perception was never allowed to develop and mature in Rwanda. Although this critique is not the only measure needed in order to bring about reconciliation in Rwanda, Rwandans must start here. They must acknowledge, then question, then criticize the enduring effects that colonialism has had on their own minds” (1999: 177).

8. Significantly, Theidon and Phenicie highlight an important implication of Wood’s research: “by showing that sexual violence is not an inevitable component of war, perpetrators are more likely to be held accountable for their crimes” (2011: 21).

9. The 2004 national census in Sierra Leone stated that there were 2,538,534 females in a population of 4,976,871 (51 percent) (Statistics Sierra Leone 2006: 4).

10. Regarding the women’s societies, Mgbako et al., for example, state that “while many African countries and grassroots organizations have made great strides in their efforts to eliminate FGM [female genital mutilation], Sierra Leone lags behind” (2010: 111). The authors add, “The fact that FGM takes place within secret societies in Sierra Leone makes eradication efforts more challenging” (112).

11. The U.S. State Department, for example, stated in 2010 that “although reliable statistics on the size of various religious groups are not available, sources estimate Roman Catholics to be 60 percent of the [Burundi] population, members of indigenous religious groups 20 percent, and Protestants 15 percent. The Muslim population is estimated to be between 2 and 5 percent, the majority of whom live in urban areas. Sunnis make up the majority of Muslims; the remainder is Shi’a” (U.S. Department of State 2010).

12. The research findings detailed in this paragraph are elaborated in Sommers 2001a and 2001c.

13. I referred to this conversation in Sommers 2006a: 142.

14. In their analysis of urban youth language in Tanzania, Reuster-Jahn and Kießling include the following Swahili adage about Dar es Salaam (increasingly known, they report, as “Bongo” and not “Bongoland”) in their dictionary: *Ukikaa Bongo lazima uchemshe ubongo*. Although Reuster-Jahn and Kießling translate this maxim as “If you live in Dar es Salaam, you have to use brains” (2006: 100), the literal translation for *uchemshe ubongo* is “you must boil your brain,” which underscores

how hard it is to make it in Dar es Salaam. More recently, the frame of reference for “Bongo” has enlarged from merely Dar es Salaam to encompass all of Tanzania (Suriano 2011: 115).

15. Strangely, the number of scholars who do comment on African cities, despite their enlarging size and significance, remains limited. As Bryceson notes, “For decades, urban areas have been of marginal interest in African studies” (2006: 9).

16. The National Research Council chimes in: “The pace of urbanization is usually closely associated with that of industrialization and economic growth.” However, in sub-Saharan Africa, “cities have been growing without a concomitant expansion of economic activity” (2003: 93).

17. The model has had lasting influence. Writing about the two articles well over three decades after their publication, Zenou states, “In two seminal papers, Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) have developed a canonical model of rural-urban migration. These papers have been so influential that they are referred [to] in the literature . . . as the Harris-Todaro model” (2006: 1).

18. In the article, Todaro excises Harris from the model’s name, stating that “the author has developed a theory of rural-urban migration (the Todaro migration model) to explain the apparently paradoxical relationship of accelerated rural-urban migration in the context of rising urban unemployment” (1997: 31).

19. The passage continues, “and hanging around with them, we got the sense that many of them are just waiting for something to happen. Should civil unrest once more return to Sierra Leone, the boys and young men we met . . . would be likely to join with anybody who promised them a better life in return for their services” (Bøås and Hatløy 2005: 27). The prediction of latent violence in excluded youth is an issue that the main author, Morten Bøås, has sounded before. An assessment of this argument is in chapter 1.

20. Perhaps nowhere is this tendency more pronounced than in many of the major works on Sierra Leone’s civil war and its aftermath, such as those by Abdullah (2004), Gberie (2005), Hoffman (2011), Keen (2005), Peters (2011) and Richards (1996). While all of these books, and many more, provide excellent insights, it is not until Coulter (2009) published her book that female youth experiences during and after Sierra Leone’s war came fully to the fore.

21. Driving across the countryside at night, which we did regularly in Liberia, was meticulously avoided in most postwar countries I had visited, including Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and South Sudan.

22. Despite being hailed as a place where primary school attendance has shot upward (e.g., United Nations Department of Public Information 2010: 1), Burundi has the highest primary school repetition rate in sub-Saharan Africa (36 percent), and 44 percent of students drop out before the final year of primary school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012: 22, 191).

23. Burundi has been described, for example, as having a poverty situation that is “clearly one of the most extreme in the world, with 93% [of Burundians] living

below a poverty line of \$2 a day,” as well as having “one of the least developed and most vulnerable economies in the world” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012: 17, 22).

24. Some of the findings were examined in a preliminary discussion paper (Sommers 2013).

25. The same definition for orphans was found in South Sudan: “Although the number of orphans in South Sudan is impossible to estimate, it is likely that they are numerous, particularly using the local definition of orphan—anyone whose father is dead” (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 11).

26. Available population statistics confirm that there are more females than males in Burundi’s population. However, the difference is small: for every female in Burundi, there are 0.98 males (Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

27. CNDD-FDD stands for National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (Conseil national pour la defense de la democratie–Forces pour la defense de la democratie). Imbonerakure translates into English as “those who see far into the distance” (Human Rights Watch 2012: 18).

28. The artist also is known as Big Fariouz and Big Fizo. The song is translated from Kirundi. In Kirundi, the words are, *Mbe nubube buzi ga mugenzi? Ubuzi bw’akagaye, bw’imyaku n’impanuka, Hama kumpera ukahakura ubusa, Ariko iyo ushonje, ataco ufise wambara, uragakora mugenzi, Rimwe na rimwe turanywa urumogi, Wibaza ko turunywa kubera iki ga mugenzi, Tuba dushaka kwiyibagiza gato mugenzi, Ishavu ry’akagaye, intimba, amarira, ubwoba, aba polici n’umubabaro, Umwanya wose, umwanya wose . . . Nta migambi dufise, Ronka ikikwiriza uzoba uri igihangange.*

29. Toto is short for *mtoto*, which translates as “child” in Kiswahili.

30. Mangema is the singular version of the word. The plural is Ibimanjema.

31. Different attitudes about condom use and protection against HIV/AIDS are mirrored by the divergence between sets of researchers who have found either “a clear positive relationship between both international and domestic conflict and climbing HIV/AIDS prevalence” (e.g., Iqbal and Zorn 2010: 149) or precisely the opposite: that “evidence that war contributes to the spread of the [HIV/AIDS] virus is meagre” (e.g., Whiteside, de Waal, and Gebre-Tensae 2006: 201).

32. Writing about a rebel attack on Freetown in January 1999, during Sierra Leone’s civil war, Junger observed that rebel soldiers “favored Tupac T-shirts and fancy haircuts” (2000: 116). An extended description of that attack, and Tupac’s influence on it, is in Sommers 2003.

33. Thirty-eight sub-Saharan African nations host refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2012: 38–41).

34. As noted in chapter 1, this view of the relative safety of cities is supported by the research of Urdal and Hoelscher, which found that the risk of social disturbance went down in African cities as youth populations increased (2009: 17).

35. Still another case is postwar Guinea-Bissau, where Vigh finds youth submerged

in “social death” (2006: 104). He explains this “key social feature of youth” (103–104) in the following way. “Due to the disastrous social and economic situation” in Guinea-Bissau, “the possibility of progressing meaningfully in life is, for Bissauian youth, close to being non-existent.” Vigh adds that “this process of decline and crisis seems especially severe in relation to young, urban males” (104).

Chapter Four. The Development Response

1. UNDP describes the Human Development Index as “a composite measure of indicators along three dimensions: life expectancy, educational attainment and command over the resources needed for a decent living” (United Nations Development Programme 2013: 1).

2. The G8 nations are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

3. Regarding the US\$11.0 billion increase in aid, a report by One explains that Russia did not boost aid, “as it does not report to the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development]” (2013: 5).

4. The seventeen nations are: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Radelet also mentions seven “emerging” nations where encouraging economic growth is observable: Benin, Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, and Sierra Leone (2010: 13).

5. In his Charles Francis Adams Lecture at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, on September 17, 2012, Radelet joined UNDP and many others in trumpeting unprecedented advances in international development. “We live together in the greatest era of global development progress ever, from poverty reduction, income growth, improvements in health and education and democracy,” Radelet said. “This is not to say that everything is wonderful and fine, but this is to say that we’re making a huge amount of progress” (Eckel 2012). Challenges to this assessment of development progress will be noted later in the chapter.

6. Radelet also states, for example, that the Rwandan government’s work in the health sector has “still far to go” and that “there is still a long way to go to make the business environments competitive” in several of the countries he highlights (2010: 40, 86).

7. The Group of Experts who produced the report described their primary role as “to investigate and document evidence regarding the procurement of military equipment, including weapons and ammunition, by armed groups active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as their related financial networks and involvement in the exploitation and trade of natural resources” (Hege et al. 2012: 6). Much of their work, however, investigated the actions and organization of M23.

8. Reyntjens, for example, considers Kagame to be “probably the worst war criminal in office today” (French 2013). Uvin states that the Rwandan government’s “brutal interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo . . . will go down in history as some of the most callous, disrespectful of human life, cynical, and amoral acts committed by Africans against other Africans” (2011: 3).

9. Perhaps more comprehensively than any other source, *Political Governance in Post-genocide Rwanda* records a series of incidents and reported deaths (Reyntjens 2013). I derived the domestic estimates from specific figures reported in the book. They are: 15,000–30,000 people killed by the RPF between May and July 1994 (as noted in the unofficial, unreleased “Gersony report”) (102); the Kibeho events in April 1995 that resulted in either 338 Rwandans killed (Rwandan government estimate) or up to 24,040 Rwandans killed (combined estimate of UN officials reported by Human Rights Watch and Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de L’homme [FIDH] of 4,050, plus the estimate of 20,000 more by scholar Gérard Prunier) (106); reports by the UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda of killings in July–August 1996 of at least 384 and by Amnesty International of at least 650 people between April and July 1996 (109); and “close to 10,000” civilians killed by the Rwandan Patriotic Army/national Rwandan army (I use an estimate of 8,000) between October 1997 and January 1998 (116). Although Reyntjens reports many other incidents of killings, the numbers are unspecific. They are thus not included in the range of reported estimates.

10. Reyntjens contends that the “genocide credit” drew from the fact that genocidal violence in Rwanda in 1994 was “committed almost ‘live’, which encouraged the international community to reason in terms of good and bad guys. As the ‘bad guys’ were easily identifiable, the others (i.e. the RPF) had to be the ‘good guys’” (2004: 200). Reyntjens has subsequently argued that “the so-called international community” has become “a willing hostage to [the Rwandan government’s] spin, whether it be on political governance and human rights, on massive violations of international humanitarian law, on the aggression and plunder of the DRC, on its dangerous social and economic engineering exercise, or on the way it has injected structural violence across the country and the region” (2011: 33).

11. As detailed in chapter 1, I conducted interviews with twenty-six officials and experts in 2011–2012. I interviewed two additional experts after this period (one in 2013 and one in 2014).

12. Vircoulon states that, “for many years, it has proved impossible to find a solution to the problem of the illegal exploitation of minerals in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by actors in the conflict.” Vircoulon concludes that “the existence of an undisciplined and unpaid army, the militarisation of the eastern DRC economy, the size of the informal economy, [and] the extent of corruption among the networks of the elite means that major reform of the [Congolese] army in particular and the [government] administration in general is required” (2011).

13. Rioting that typically features youth has taken place many times in Monrovia since the end of the civil war, including in 2003 (IRIN 2003), 2004 (IRIN 2004), 2005 (IRIN 2005), and 2011 (Akam and Schmall 2011).

14. Utas also raises warning flags about the nation's security, the enduring popularity of Charles Taylor, nepotism in the banking sector, corruption in the nation's expansion of natural resource extraction, and the fact that the president's son, Robert Sirleaf, "is allegedly increasingly involved in all sectors of natural resource extraction (but also demanding bribes from smaller companies). It is believed by some that most large scale deals are brokered by him." (Utas 2011).

15. Writing in 2006 and highlighting the case of Côte d'Ivoire (whose government received twenty-six structural adjustment loans from the World Bank and IMF across the 1980s and 1990s, before civil war entered the picture), Easterly observes that "it's a little unnerving that almost all recent cases of collapses into anarchy [including Côte d'Ivoire's] were preceded by heavy World Bank and IMF involvement" (2006: 67). While Easterly doesn't believe SAP loans and conditions caused anarchy in Côte d'Ivoire, he does assert that "it would be hard to argue" that the involvement of the World Bank and the IMF "had a *positive* long-run effect" on countries where SAP took place (67; emphasis in original). Stiglitz found virtually the same result: "Structural adjustment programs did not bring sustained growth even to those, like Bolivia, that adhered to its strictures" (2003: 18).

16. There are ten policies: fiscal discipline; reordering public expenditure priorities (toward investments in basic health, education, and infrastructure and away from "unproductive subsidies and overbloomed civil services"); tax reform; liberalizing interest rates; allowing competitive exchange rates; liberalizing trade; liberalizing inward (domestic) investment; privatization; deregulation (to reduce barriers to private investment); and property rights (Moss 2011: 112).

17. Just to complicate matters, sometimes the titles for international development policies are reformulated. There is, for example, the "new post-Washington Consensus," which infuses the original approach with additional policies and ideas that aim to address their impacts on societies (Moss 2011: 116). There is also neoliberal globalization, which "posits that free trade engenders [the] efficient allocation of resources, with all participating nations gaining in the long run from higher output and lower prices" (Mensah 2008: 3).

18. Among Stiglitz's many criticisms of the IMF is that it "gives short shrift to the concerns of the poor" (2003: 216).

19. While more adult men may have formal sector jobs than either women or youth, it is not clear from Ncube's statement how many men in sub-Saharan Africa work in the formal and informal economic sectors, respectively.

20. Overall, Moss notes that, despite considerable investment in African nations to attain the MDG goals, it is likely that "nearly all of Africa will miss nearly all of the goals by 2015, no matter how much money is spent" (2011: 141–142).

21. Youth migration appears to be an added concern, as it is not part of MDG Target 16.

22. The author of the program's final evaluation also found that "there were too many UN agencies involved." He noted that the program's "logic for creating youth opportunities was premised on the assumption that after [youth in the program] obtained appropriate skills training" (Chiwara 2012: iii), most trainees "would establish income generation and microenterprises" (iii–iv). However, the program "did not implement the activities for establishing the microfinance and microcredit outputs" to support such activities (iv).

23. According to the most recent census figures for South Sudan (2008), the actual percentage would be even smaller. The census statistics list populations in particular age ranges (in this case, those ages fifteen to nineteen, twenty to twenty-four, and twenty-five to twenty-nine). The total figure for this population—2,326,846—does not include thirty-year-olds (Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation 2010: 10).

24. Butler reported the events in June 2012 as follows: "In a paper published online in *The Lancet* last month, the project claimed a significant milestone. It reported that after three years of interventions, child mortality was decreasing three times faster in the project's villages than in the host nations in general. But the analysis was criticized for underestimating nationwide improvements in child mortality, and over-estimating those in the Millennium Villages. The paper's lead author, Paul Pronyk, later accepted that this claim had put the Millennium Village mortality reduction 'in an excessively positive light', and retracted it. Pronyk then resigned as director of Monitoring and Evaluation at Columbia University's Center for Global Health and Economic Development" (2012).

25. A World Bank publication confirms Natsios's take by highlighting the significance of "the results chain." The definition provided is as follows: "The logical framework (LogFrame) helps to clarify objectives of any project, program, or policy. It aids in identification of the expected causal links—the 'program logic'—in the following results chain: inputs, processes, outputs (including coverage or 'reach' across beneficiary groups), outcomes, and impact. It leads to the identification of performance indicators at each stage in this chain, as well as risks which might impede the attainment of the objectives. The LogFrame is also a vehicle for engaging partners in clarifying objectives and designing activities. During implementation the LogFrame serves as a useful tool to review progress and take corrective action" (2004b: 8).

26. Easterly is referring to Sachs's arguments about targeted aid investments and the MDG goals that embody this philosophy.

27. Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter add that "it is now possible to find tools for rights-based programming in multiple sectors, including health, sanitation, and women's rights." They conclude that "the jury is still out on whether the rights-based approach represents a fundamental paradigm shift for the global development sector" (2012: 500).

28. Many of the names for the informal economy—such as parallel, concealed, creeping, disguised, submarine, unobserved (Karl 1999–2000: 54)—create a picture of activities that are illicit and wrong.

29. Contracts also make it easier for USAID to gauge precisely how its funds are being spent. This is important because Congress “earmarks” much of the money that USAID spends. Earmarked funds allow Congress to mandate “exactly how those funds are spent in specific countries.” Frumin observes that although congressional earmarks are “often well intentioned,” they inhibit USAID’s “ability to implement programs” (2009: 13).

30. In fact, the large amounts of funds flowing through USAID led to some allegations of corruption. Rohde highlights one: the case of the Academy for Educational Development (AED), which was a nonprofit NGO, not a for-profit company. Nonetheless, AED “rode the post-9/11 spending blitz, winning sixty-five USAID contracts worth roughly \$650 million.” In a publicized case, government auditors “discovered systematic fraud” (Rohde 2013: 56).

31. Frumin provides additional context about this change. Over four decades, the size of USAID’s staff shrunk by 500 percent while the amount of aid it spent increased. In 1969, approximately ten thousand USAID officers spent nearly US\$1.7 billion dollars (equal to about \$9.6 billion dollars in 2009) in about seventy developing countries. In 2010, two thousand USAID officers were responsible for spending almost US\$13 billion in ninety countries (Frumin 2009: 11–12).

32. To back up his three assertions, Collier relates two stories—without naming sources—one about a “little gang of rebels” who kidnapped foreign tourists in the Philippines in 2002 and one about a “now-famous study” of young men in Chicago who joined gangs “because of the small chance of big money” (2007: 20, 21). These examples are curious, since there are countries with slower economic growth and lower average incomes than the Philippines, and the United States has not had a civil war for 150 years.

33. McGovern’s essay about two of Collier’s books contains the following comment: “The self-assuredness of economists such as Collier may be part of the problem and not, as they suppose, a part of the solution. For an outsider,” the anthropologist McGovern states, “the strangest thing about the field of economics is the fact that although it appears to be wrong much of the time, rather than becoming chastened or introverted, most of its practitioners seem to become bolder, drawing strength from their failures as the mythological Antaeus did by touching the ground” (2011b: 347).

34. Additionally, Myers found that a hallowed dimension of government reform—the devolution of significant central governmental power and authority to lower government levels, known as decentralization—has rendered superficial results. The underlying reality is that “the ideas from below hardly matter at all to policy development or outcomes, particularly where the working groups['] structures are

extraordinarily top-heavy with government personnel and where expatriate consultants or donors drive the program from beginning to end” (2005: 142). Two other qualitative research studies also uncovered underwhelming outcomes. In Rwanda, the widely touted decentralization reforms appeared to do the reverse of what was intended, providing Rwanda’s central government “with opportunities to expand, rather than transfer or devolve, its power and influence” (Sommers 2012b: 89). Uvin’s qualitative research in nearby Burundi pointed to a bolder conclusion: “The decentralization law is entirely set up to create the least possible bottom-up dynamic and the maximum amount of centralized control. But the [international] donors love decentralization, and masses of money flows into it” (2009: 80).

35. The nature of quantitative data is an issue that resurfaces in the section on evaluation.

36. Extensive field research in Rwanda illuminates these tendencies. “One is left with a strong sense of officials viewing youth as young people who must be guided, shaped, led, influenced, directed, and persuaded. An equally strong theme is the steady resistance of youth to accepting their instructions, orders, guidance, remedies, and advice” (Sommers 2012b: 81).

37. An initiative could include development projects as well as programs. Here, I will focus on development programs, which generally are larger and broader in scope. Both in literature on international aid and during interviews with officials and experts, programs, not projects, tend to be the frame of reference for development initiatives or actions.

38. Given pervasive fears about male youth unemployment, as well as prospects for short-term impact, it is nonetheless notable that “workforce development programs for females seem to have the lowest amount of cost with the highest rate of returns” (Olenik and Fawcett 2013: 11).

39. Bamberger’s assessment, published over a decade ago, has retained its relevance.

40. Over the course of my evaluation research, I learned about favored and neglected zones in rural Burundian communes. I subsequently wrote about “a potential danger in reconstructing postwar countries.” The research findings indicated that “rebuilding damaged buildings, institutions, and authority systems without consideration of their geographic distribution runs the risk of simultaneously reinforcing structural inequities that were a root cause of civil war” (Sommers 2005b: 1). I called this phenomenon “geographic favoritism,” which I summed up in the following way: “In the two provinces studied [in rural Burundi], there was an historic unequal distribution of resources and assets in different geographic zones dating back to the colonial era. These inequalities have been exacerbated by government practices and international agency actions in the post-conflict and reconstruction phase. This has resulted in significant and possibly explosive disparities along geographic, ethnic, and class lines which threaten Burundi’s fragile peace process” (1). Uvin’s subsequent

research in Burundi confirmed that “geographical maldistribution within communes is prevalent.” Yet he discovered that the pattern was not always consistent: in some communes, remote zones received most of the investment and attention (2009: 35).

Chapter Six. Toward Youth Inclusion

1. Goldin explains that “positive youth development (PYD) refers to intentional efforts of other youth, adults, communities, government agencies, and schools to provide opportunities for youth to enhance their interests, skills, and abilities into their adulthoods” (2013: 3).

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